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COURT ROYAL.

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

WITHOUT WARNING.



late next morning, and then only, over their breakfast, was Joanna's behaviour discussed.

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BEAVIS remained up, smoking and musing in the study till his father returned. He did not speak to him about Joanna that night, as the old man looked tired. He gave him his candle, made a joke about a midday breakfast and lunch rolled into one, at which they would meet, and retired to rest.

Neither Beavis nor his father came down till

‘I never take tea with meat. What is it this morning? Kidneys? Kidneys above all. No tea, Beavis, coffee for me; less tannin in it. Can you conceive anything more calculated to give dyspepsia than to immerse meat in a fluid charged with tannin? You convert it at one stroke into leather, and make demands on the gastric juice which it is not qualified to perform. No, tea is poison; give me coffee.’

‘Certainly, my dear father,’ said Beavis with a smile. ‘I fear I have something to communicate which will disagree with you more than tea.’

‘Then reserve it.’

‘I must not. We must act upon it at once.’

Mr. Worthivale sighed. ‘I enjoyed myself so greatly last night. Indeed, I do not think I have spent such a happy ten days as these last since I was a boy. Well, what is it?’

Then Beavis told his father what he had seen that morning early on his return from Court Royal. ‘Mr. Worthivale was annoyed. ‘One cannot get along a week without unpleasantnesses,’ he said peevishly. ‘Really, at my time of life I expect relief from worries.’

‘Where did you leave your keys?’

‘I cannot say for certain. Yes, I can. I am positive: that is, I think I locked everything up as usual, and put the keys in my trousers pocket. I generally—I may say always—do so on principle. But yesterday I was in such a hurry about the ball. My time and thoughts were in such requisition that I may have committed the oversight of leaving them in the bookcase. I was not at the office at all after half-past three, and then I was there for an hour only. There was no money in the drawers.’

‘No, but there was information concerning the Duke’s affairs worth to some people a good deal of money.’

‘It would certainly be annoying if stupid gossip got about concerning the family embarrassments.’

‘I do not allude to gossip.’

‘I’ll tell you what I will do, Beavis. I’ll ring for the girl, and then we will examine her together. I see no cause for alarm. She can neither read nor write.’

‘Who told you so?’

‘A Mrs. Delany, in whose service she was before she came to us. Touch the bell, Beavis.’

In response to the summons Emily appeared.

'Look here,' said the steward; 'send the other girl to me. I mean Joan or Joanna, whichever she is called, I cannot remember. I want a word with her.'

'Please sir,' answered Emily, 'she is gone.'

'Gone!' exclaimed father and son in a breath.

'Yes, sir. She went by the first coach this morning, when you were asleep. She said as how the young master had given her notice to be off at once. She took her box out into the road herself. She was in a pretty take on too, sir, because, as she said —to use her very words—she was chiselled out of a dance. She'd set her heart on going to the tenants' ball to-night. Her and I had a regular breeze because we could not both go, and it ended in the usual way. She got her way, and made me go last night just to look on and help. She was crying with vexation because she could not be at the dance. When she went away she said, What would Lady Grace think, who had been so kind to her, and Miss Lucy, who'd taught her to dance!'

'I did not give her notice,' said Beavis in a low tone to his father.

'She has not had her wage,' said the steward aloud to Beavis and Emily.

'Well, now, that is queer,' began the maid, when the young man cut her short with,

'You may go.'

As soon as the girl was gone Beavis said, 'This makes matters more suspicious. I told Joanna that I would examine her with you to-day, and rather than subject herself to interrogation she takes herself off without warning.'

'She forfeits her wages,' said Mr. Worthivale. 'But I dare be bound she misunderstood you. Beavis, you speak rather sharp with servants. I dare say Emily would have talked on for half an hour if you had not cut her over the knuckles so sharp.'

'I have no doubt whatever she would.'

'She might have told us a good deal,' said his father. 'I have no doubt in my mind that a misapprehension lies at the bottom of this unfortunate affair. Of course, Joan had no right to be in the office, but perhaps she was dusting and tidying. You know yourself how neat she keeps that room, which of old was always in a litter. Once I never knew where to lay my hand on anything. I shall miss her; she had her good points. I dare say you snapped off her head when you came in and found the poor creature dozing over her work. No doubt she was tired. You

are too hasty, Beavis, too hasty by far. No question she has left her address with Emily. I will ring and inquire.'

Beavis stayed his father. 'I am sure she has not. This is a more serious matter than you suppose. I never liked the looks of the girl; she was too clever.'

'That comes of education; the over-education of this nineteenth century.'

'But she can neither read nor write.'

'Oh! I beg your pardon. I mean the reverse. She is clever because not overtaxed by Board School masters straining poor, underfed brains to reach standards that are far above their level.'

'Whence did she come?'

'From Plymouth, from Colonel Delany's—a very respectable family. He is connected by marriage with the Pomeroy's. I do not know who Mrs. Delany was, but of course she is a lady, and she wrote in highest commendation of the girl.'

'Let me see the letter.'

'It is somewhere in the office; I think I can find it; follow me. But mind, Beavis,' said the steward, stopping at the door, and holding up his finger; 'remember what I have said about drinking tea with meat. You deliberately tan your food, and yet you expect to digest it. As well eat sole-leather.'

The old man fumbled in his drawers.

'I thought I had put it in this pigeon-hole, among sundries. It seems to have made itself wings and gone.'

'I have little doubt Joanna has taken it.'

'She could not read or write,' said Mr. Worthivale.

'If she does not read, why did she pull out the ledgers? If she does not write, who made a précis of the debts and income of the family in the little note-book I saw?'

'It may have been in my handwriting. I often take odd scraps of paper and figure on them the revenue of the Kingsbridge estates, and the outgoings, and try to extract some comfort from them. I dare say you will find a score of such balances in the wastepaper basket.'

'They ought not to be there.'

'Who is the wiser? I put initials to the debts.'

'What I saw was not in your handwriting, and was done very clearly and systematically. It was done by some one experienced in bookkeeping—that is the only point that shakes my conviction that the girl has bled your books.'

‘What was the back of the account-book like?’

‘I did not see it. Joanna knocked the candle over, as I am convinced, deliberately, and in the dark secreted the notes and put away the ledgers. I heard her do the latter, and when she returned with the candle, everything was in place, and the account-book nowhere that I could see.’

‘We will overhaul the cabinet.’

‘I should like to overhaul her room.’

‘I will call Emily.’

The maid conducted Beavis upstairs.

He looked round. The bed had not been slept in. Some scraps of paper lay scattered on the floor; a saucer with water in it stood in the window.

‘Ah!’ said Emily, ‘never was nobody so stuck up as Joanna over nothing as she was over the pot of lily of the valley her ladyship gave her. She went off on the top of the coach, hugging it like a baby, and I seed her kiss her hand and wave it, right away over the woods towards Court Royal; and she was crying. I reckon she was sorry to go. She was so taken with Lady Grace, she nigh worshipped the ground she trod on; and the last thing I heard her say was, “Oh, what will Lady Grace think!” Why, sir, I reckon her ladyship won’t cast a thought after her.’

Beavis shook his head.

‘Joanna has not left a pin that was her own. She looked about the room a score of times to make sure she had everything. She carried away her pink silk as she minded to have worn at the tenants’ ball, had it not been spoiled with mineral water.’

‘Did she give you her address?’

‘No, sir, her and me wasn’t over-good friends. She was one that would have all her own way, she was that overbearing. I did think it was not fair that she should go to the dance to-night and not I, who am the longest in the place, but she was that set on it, I reckon there was no withstanding her. Lady Grace and Miss Lucy had tauglit her to dance for the purpose—she brought this up on me, and what was I to say?’

‘That will do,’ said Beavis. ‘I asked a simple question and required a simple answer.’

‘And after all, sir,’ said the unabashed Emily, ‘she won’t go to the ball neither. That’s sweet comfort.’

The tenants’ ball began at seven, and by tacit understanding was to be over at two in the morning. The hours were very

much earlier than at the grand ball of the evening before. Mr. Worthivale and Beavis were there, as a matter of course, and all the Ducal family appeared. His Grace remained in the ball-room longer than on the former occasion, talking to the young farmers' sons and daughters, showing that he knew them all by name, took an interest in their welfare, and was delighted to have them about him enjoying themselves. He was obstinate on this evening, he would not go when his daughter thought advisable.

'No, dear,' he said, 'it refreshes me to see all their happy faces. How hearty they are; how well they behave; they are so courteous and kindly. I do like our English peasantry; there is a gentility of feeling about them I meet with nowhere else—good hearts and clear heads.'

The Duke knew nearly every one. He had the happy faculty of never forgetting a face, and of remembering the circumstances of every family. He had the tact of inquiring after absent members, by name, with such real or well-simulated interest, as to gratify those he addressed, and convince them of his sincerity and friendship.

'What! Mrs. Prowse! You here? This is an unexpected pleasure. How many years ago was it that you were pretty Mary Eastlake, with whom I opened the ball? The belle of Aventon Gifford.'

'Well, your Grace, my daughter has come for her first dance, and as I've no other children—you'll excuse me, your Grace—I thought I'd come with her and see her safe home.'

'Bring her to me. If she is like you in old days, she will kill many hearts this evening.'

'Well, Richard Palmer! I hope you have brought your voice and will favour us with a song, when the dancers give over for a moment. How is poor Jane? Is she still suffering from her spine. I was so grieved to hear of her accident, I had counted on her presence this evening.'

'How are you, Mr. Newberry? Last time I saw you, your wife was bent on the great ash being cut down in front of the gate. It went to my heart to deny her, the tree was so fine, but I learnt a lesson; the gale of last October tore the tree to pieces and pelted your roof with the boughs.'

'Broke the roof through and through, your Grace.'

'That is a lesson never to deny the ladies anything; I dare say your own experience teaches you the same.'

‘How do you do, Mr. Nesbitt?’ to a schoolmaster; ‘glad I secured your services for the new school at Wooley. I read your account of your misadventures—that you sent to *Blackwood*—with great amusement. Never laughed so much in my life. It was smartly written—very. You will do something with your pen some day.’

‘Oh, Lucy, dear,’ said Lady Grace, ‘do go to papa and persuade him to retire. He is so happy when he gets with the young people that he will stay on here longer than is judicious. He will suffer for it to-morrow, and I am sure that they will dance with more ease when the restraint of his presence is removed. Look! there are only three circling round the room now, to the strains of the whole marine band, and they are blushing and disposed to give it up. Where is Joanna? What has become of that odd girl? I see her nowhere.’

‘I do not know; I will ask my father, or Beavis.’

‘Do, Lucy, go to the Duke. He will listen to you when he will not obey me or Uncle Ronald—not even the Archdeacon. You have such a coaxing way, and yet you are so resolute, he will not refuse to go. Dear old man! it is always “Where is Lucy?” with him. Nothing goes right unless under your hands.’

Then Lady Grace caught the eye of Beavis, and beckoned him to her. ‘Where is your maid Joanna?’ she asked. ‘Do see how shy the young folk are. These couples are only dancing because I have set them spinning, and they do it out of duty, not because they enjoy themselves. Joanna has no shyness, I will get her a partner and set her off.’

‘She is not here, Lady Grace.’

‘Not here! But how is this? Could you not spare her? I am sorry; Lucy and I have been teaching her to dance, and she had so set her heart on this evening.’

‘She is a perplexing, queer girl.’

‘She is a girl worth studying, a girl from whom a great deal may be learnt; delightfully fresh and yet terribly worn out, if you can understand such a compound of opposites. Is not that the sum of Hegel’s philosophy, the conciliation of antagonisms? Well, that is Joanna. I am so sorry she is not here. I should have delighted to see how she profited by my teaching.’

‘She is gone, Lady Grace.’

‘Gone!’

‘Yes, gone without warning.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNSTABLE AS WATER.

THREE days after the grand ball the Rigsbys left. Miss Rigsby had not appeared at the tenants' ball; she was tired, and did not feel well. The rumour of the projected marriage had got about, and the tenants would have liked to have seen their future Duchess, but she was ungracious; she disliked vulgar people and would not appear, to the disappointment of the tenants and of the Duke, who thought that, in this matter, she did not act with the consideration proper to her position.

The Marquess and she had seen a good deal of each other, and everything seemed favourable to a marriage. Mr. Rigsby held long conferences with the Duke, and came away greatly impressed with his urbanity, and still more impressed with the conviction that he had made his own wisdom and importance clear to the Duke. Miss Rigsby had convinced herself that she was in love with the Marquess. Miss Stokes assured her of the passion that consumed the bosom of her lover. Lord Saltcombe did not in any way vary in his behaviour; always courteous and considerate, ready to be with her on every occasion, conversing on her reminiscences of Ceylon, and attracting her attention to what was interesting in the country that was shortly to be her home. She had no appreciation of what was good in art, and he amused himself and her in endeavouring to instil into her some of the first principles of taste.

The day after the departure of the Rigsbys Beavis went to his friend's rooms. He found the Marquess in his arm-chair among a heap of papers that he had torn up and cast about him on the floor. He was so deep in his thoughts, which were of a painful nature, that he did not notice the entrance of Beavis. At his first word he started and sprang up bewildered, unable at once to recognise the speaker.

‘You are, I hear, going to Plymouth, Saltcombe.’

‘I—Plymouth—oh yes, I forgot. To be sure, yes, Beavis, I am going there for a while. How hot it is in the room.’

The Marquess went to the window and threw it open, drew a long breath, passed his red silk handkerchief over his brow, and then returning to his chair, said, ‘Oh, Beavis! you have no conception of the strain on one's powers to keep up the appearance of being a lover.’

'Good heavens!' exclaimed Beavis; 'speak lower, or say nothing on the matter.'

'I must speak. I have no one but yourself to whom I can give vent to my feelings. This is your doing; you have put me on the rack.'

'I have advised for the best.'

'I know you have,' answered the Marquess with a bitter laugh. 'I will go through with it now, my honour is engaged, so do not fear. *Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes.* You must excuse me if, at times, my courage gives way.'

Beavis had never before seen Lord Saltcombe so excited. He was usually composed and cool.

'The Duke wants a word with you,' said Beavis. 'I have come to tell you that he wishes to speak to you in the rose boudoir.'

The Marquess nodded. 'One moment, Beavis, before I go.'

'I am at your service.'

'Tell me, how is it that we are spending money right and left just now, and that there is not the ever-recurring worry of a deficit?'

Beavis hesitated.

'I insist on knowing,' said Lord Saltcombe.

'The necessary sums have been lent.'

'What! a fresh loan to crush us! At what rate of interest now? Who is the lender? Another Jew?'

'No Jew,' answered Beavis. 'No interest is asked, as all will be repaid as soon as your marriage takes place.'

'Who is the Good Samaritan that has flown to the rescue?'

'There is nothing of the Good Samaritan in this. It is but a temporary accommodation.'

'But who is this most accommodating party?'

'My father.'

The Marquess stood still and looked at Beavis. He put his hand to his chin; it shook. 'Good God!' he exclaimed. 'You—you dear good friends! You again helping us!' He was greatly moved. He took Beavis' hand and held it tightly in his whilst he looked out of the window. 'Oh Beavis! how kind, how noble you are. I insist on the whole truth. What is the sum advanced?'

'Four thousand.'

'Is that your father's money?'

'No.'

'Whose is it then?'

Beavis did not reply. He looked down.

‘I insist on being told.’

‘Lucy’s.’

‘What!’ exclaimed the Marquess, colouring; ‘indebted to dear Lucy more deeply still. Oh, Beavis, never, never can we repay the debt we owe your house. So Lucy finds the money to wreath the ox for the sacrifice.’ He was silent, he let go his friend’s hand and stood before the fire, looking down and kicking the hearth. ‘It shall all be repaid,’ he said at last; ‘I mean the money. The good intent, the self-sacrifice, that can only be treasured in our hearts, a priceless possession. Beavis, do not fear. The marriage will take place, and that speedily. I cannot bear to be indebted so deeply to you.’

‘Your father is awaiting you,’ said Beavis, anxious to cut short a scene painful to both.

The Marquess left the room, and sought his father.

The Duke led a very regular life, regulated to the smallest details. He suffered from sleeplessness, and therefore did not rise till late. He breakfasted at half-past ten, after which he was visited by his son and daughter, and occasionally by Lord Ronald. The General was up at half-past six, and took a constitutional till eight, when he came in and had a cup of coffee. He breakfasted with the rest at nine. The Duke read his letters whilst dressing, and arranged them in three piles; those he must himself reply to, those that might be answered by his daughter or son, and those on business, which he passed over to the steward. Mr. Worthivale called daily—or almost daily—at noon, and sat with him for an hour. The Duke partook of a light luncheon at half-past one, and when the weather permitted he took a drive; if the weather was unfavourable he walked in his conservatories.

He generally dined with the family, and sat with them for a couple of hours after dinner. Then he retired for the night. On Sundays he breakfasted half-an-hour earlier, in order that he might attend church.

Sometimes after dinner he took a hand at whist, or played chess with the Vicar, who was frequently invited to Court Royal. In former years he had spent the season in town, but his health no longer permitted his travelling by rail, and his children had accommodated themselves to a country life.

The Duke had pretended to pass over the care of the property to his son, and he no longer inquired into the balance; that the

Marquess was expected to see to ; but he amused himself with details, the complaints of the farmers, their demands for fresh buildings, their applications for drainage operations. These he took up, and it gave a zest to his drives to inspect the farms and see the proposed improvements. This was a little vexatious to the steward, who endeavoured to cut down expenses. The tenants knew that they were sure of a favourable answer from his Grace, and therefore applied direct to him.

The Duke had his private account at the bank ; a modest sum of a thousand pounds was always paid in to this account, on which he drew independently of the house. The cost of keeping up Court Royal, the wages, the housekeeping, the gardens, belonged to a separate account, with which he did not concern himself. That was under the control of Lucy and her father ; subject, of course, to Lady Grace, if she chose to supervise it, but this she never did.

The general accounts, the rent roll, the receipts, the outlay on the estates, the charges on the property, the interest on the mortgages and loans, these the Marquess was supposed to examine every half-year ; but he did so in a careless, impatient manner, and refused to take an interest in the property. Time enough, he thought, when forced to do so, on his succession to the estates.

' Sit down, Herbert,' said the Duke, when Lord Saltcombe entered. ' We must have a little quiet conversation together. You are going to Plymouth ; it is well, you must be with your *fiancée* as much as you can to learn each other's characters and habits. I confess to a little surprise. I had thought you would have been guided in your choice less by caprice. Still—you are the judge of what is best for yourself. In the matter of fortune everything is satisfactory, and perhaps that is not a point to be disregarded, as our fortunes are not exactly what they were. The property was heavily burdened when it came to me ; still, I have lived very quietly of late, and a margin must be left to turn over and extinguish such debts as were formerly contracted.'

The Marquess looked down.

' You have been shut out from the world for some years, Herbert. That has not met with my approval. Your place was in London, and you ought to have been in Parliament. Now that you are about to be married I expect you will take your proper position in the social and political constellations. I hope this union is one of genuine affection.'

‘I trust it meets with your approval.’

‘I have nothing against it. The young lady has been properly educated, the family is respectable. The Rigsbys of Lincolnshire are known; they have been settled in that most dismal of counties for several centuries. They have a Baronet in the family—a late creation. Well, in these days one must not



be too nice.’ After a pause, the Duke went on: ‘You are quite right to go to Plymouth. I wish you there to take a good suite of rooms in the Royal Hotel, and live up to your station. Take some of your own servants with you; your valet, and your own riding and driving horses, and your groom. I should advise a dog-cart and a drag. I am not one to encourage extravagance, indeed I hate display, it is vulgar; but your position demands a certain amount of appearance. You are the representative of the

house, now that I am a poor broken creature, and cannot show in public. An Eveleigh must always maintain his dignity. I beg you to remember this. Never let yourself down.'

Lord Saltcombe, not knowing what answer to make, bowed. His father accepted this movement as a sign of submission to his will.

'One thing more. I believe you have not as yet made your *fiancée* a present. This, of course, you must do. I have looked through the family jewels, but see nothing that quite answers the purpose. I should like you to spare no expense; run up to town and choose out a suitable present, a diamond necklace or tiara. It is possible you may not have the sum sufficient at your command. I have therefore drawn you a blank cheque on my private account. Fill in the sum when you know what you want.'

'I cannot—my father.'

'You must, Herbert. It is my desire. I shall be annoyed if you give your betrothed a present unworthy of a future Duchess of Kingsbridge.'

Lord Saltcombe was too agitated to speak.

'Herbert,' continued the old Duke, 'I give my full consent to this union, and I ask the Almighty on my knees to shower His richest blessing upon it. May you be happy as I was happy with your dear, never-to-be-forgotten mother. You deserve it. A blessing is attached to filial obedience, and you have always been a dutiful and loving son; you have never caused me an hour's pain, never given me occasion to blush to think that a son of mine has stained the hereditary honour.'

Lord Saltcombe returned to his apartments in a condition of confusion and distress that made him thankful Beavis was not there to see him. He threw himself in his chair, covered his face with his hands, and a sob broke from his bosom and relieved the immediate tension.

He sat thus thinking, hiding his face from no one, for he was alone, for a quarter of an hour. Then, as though fired by a sudden resolution, he took a key from his pocket and opened his cabinet. He drew forth a drawer and took from it a bundle of faded letters. He set his lips closely, and his brows were contracted.

The fire was low. He took the tongs and raked it together, and put on a billet of wood. Then, to brisk it up, cast on it the scraps of paper from the floor. Now the fire flamed, and the dry wood caught and crackled.

Lord Saltcombe leaned back in his chair, and untied the bundle of letters. He drew the notes from their envelopes, and looked at one, then another. His face relaxed; an expression of pain of a different sort settled on it. He made an effort to recover his firmness and to carry out his resolution. He threw one, two, three envelopes on the flames, and sighed as they flared. He knelt down, and placed the letters on the hearth. Then he drew from the cabinet the little miniature already described, and looked at it long, with face that twitched with suffering. He put it towards his lips—as about to kiss it, then recovered himself, and placed it on the little pyre of old letters.

‘They must all go together now,’ he said, and put his hand to the billet of wood to bring it to the little pile. But the wood was hot and burnt his fingers. Then he took the tongs, and picked up a coal, and laid it on one of the papers. The coal died out, and Lord Saltcombe took the paper, and brushed away the charred fragments. He struck a vesta match, but his hand trembled and he was unable to fire with it the old letters.

Then he stood up, and leaning his elbow on the chimney-piece, rested his head against his hand, and looked down on the miniature on the hearth. How lovely that face was! The great dark eyes seemed to plead for pity. ‘Why should I?’ asked the Marquess. ‘It must be done before I am married. Then I must utterly destroy all memories of the past—but not yet! surely not yet!’ He stooped, picked up the miniature, tied the letters together again, and replaced them and the picture in their old drawer.

The resolution of Lord Saltcombe had led him to burn three envelopes.

CHAPTER XXVII.

REVOLT.

MR. LAZARUS was engaged on his dinner. He sat on the chair without a bottom, with a plate on his knees. In that plate were three cold Jerusalem artichokes. He had a fourth on the end of an iron fork, and he held it between his eye and the window. ‘It is deadly grey in flesh,’ he said, ‘and sits cold on the stomach. I wish Joanna were back to warm my victuals. It is not the quality I object to, it’s the coldness. There is a sort of damp chill about

these cold artichokes, like grey November fog solidified into vegetable pills. Joanna is a long time about her business. I know what it is—the great dinners she gets there, goose and sage stuffing, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, the beef with little white curls of horse-radish on it, like the first locks on the head of an innocent babe, that a mother loves to play with. One of the first things that ever I can remember, when I turn my eyes lovingly



back upon childhood, is tapioca pudding; how delicious it was, golden on top like cream, and browned here and there, made with good milk and an egg. There is a deal of difference between the tapioca now and what it was then. Now best Rio is eightpence-halfpenny, Penang is fivepence; then it cost me nothing. Those childish days were lovely. I paid for nothing, I consumed everything gratis. They will never return, never. I wish Joanna were back; I can't stomach these artichokes. I'd make her eat them,

it is a sin to waste them, and I'd get myself a cheesecake.' The door was thrown open, and Joanna appeared, thrusting her box before her with one hand and both knees, whilst with the left hand she clasped a flower-pot.

'There!' said she, 'I'm back, Mr. Lazarus. The man outside is waiting to be paid for carrying my box. He wants a shilling, but he can be forced to be content with ninepence if you refuse to give more. I want some dinner.'

'Here, take it,' said Lazarus, handing her the plate; 'do as you always have done—tear the very food from my mouth. You long-necked cormorant! You've done growing, and ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

'The porter is waiting to be paid,' said Joanna.

'I suppose eightpence and a French sou will do, if I slip it among the English coppers. Take this; you shall get no more. With a little effort you might have carried the box yourself.'

An altercation was heard outside when the girl offered the porter the eightpence and sou. Lazarus put his hands in his pockets and listened with composure. To put his hands in his pockets he was forced to stand up; then he sat down in the bottomless chair, and clenched them in the position where he had thrust them. Not another halfpenny would he give, but if the porter were inclined to deal, that was another matter.

Joanna returned triumphant. 'He went away cursing all Jews,' she said.

'Let him curse,' answered Lazarus; 'that relieves temper and don't hurt. There are your victuals, Joanna. I hope you've not been so pampered as to have your stomach spoiled. I suppose geese have been thick as quails in Kibroth-hataavah. I don't like goose, it is greasy food. Mutton, boiled, with caper sauce, roast with currant jelly,—bah! you are puffy about the face, laying on fat in flakes. Tapioca, I suppose, every day, gorging yourself on it,—guzzling greengage trifle, making a beast of yourself on meringues. I had a meringue once, the day I was married, that ended in gall and bitterness. I don't mean the meringue, I mean the marriage. The meringue cost me fourpence.'

Joanna took the plate of cold artichokes, turned them contemptuously over, and ate them.

'I'll tell you what it is, master,' she said; 'I've toiled and lied for you, and done a deal of dirty work. I've done dirty work here, mending old clothes, and patching and darning carpets, but

the dirtiest work you ever set me to do is what I have done at Court Royal. What has come of it all? I am cheated out of two dances. You sent me there, just when I was about to get a little amusement and learn dancing, and when I got there, and did learn, you gave me work to do that forced me to run away and miss the tenants' ball. It is not fair.'

'Run away!' echoed Lazarus. 'You haven't run away, and not done what you was sent after? You can't have been so wicked?'

'I've done it,' said Joanna, 'and truly ashamed of myself I am. I tell you what it is, Mr. Lazarus, unless I was pawned to you and couldn't do otherwise, I'd strike. But you know you've got me, and can drive me where you will. I give you fair warning, I'll kill myself rather than do more of that sort of dirty work; then you may whistle for your half-a-sovereign, and the interest—seven shillings. I reckon you'll be careful not to drive me to extremities, lest you are left seventeen shillings to the bad.' Joanna looked round the kitchen. 'What a proper mess you've got everything into whilst I've been away. It is a piggery. No wonder Moses forbade you eating swine's flesh, it would be sheer cannibalism. Everything was bad before, but it is bad and rusty and dirty now. I will not have it. Take yourself out of that seatless chair; you're sinking through it so low that in another minute you'll be sitting on the floor. Get out; I'll bring you down a sound chair from upstairs.'

'The chair is good, Joanna, it only wants the oven tray across it.'

'I will not have it here. I have been in kitchens that were a pleasure to live in. There every bit of wood was white, and every bit of metal shone. I could have been happy there, but for what you'd set me at, and that took the pleasure out of everything. Look at that window-pane, cracked where the boys threw a stone eighteen months ago. A dab of putty holds it together, and stops the hole where the stone went through. It must be mended. I will not bear it left like this.'

'Go along, Joanna; now you have glutted your appetite, go and get on your old clothes. Those you have on are too good for this shop.'

'No—I will not put on such mean, miserable rags again. I have worn what are neat and clean, and neat and clean I shall dress henceforth. Unless I have my own way, I won't light the fire and boil the kettle, I won't peel the potatoes, nor turn uni-

forms, nor sell anything. I'll lie in bed, and you won't get me out except with dynamite.'

'You've been spoiled,' said the pawnbroker. 'Oh, the wickedness of the world! I had you here, sheltered under my wing from every harm, and when I send you out a little way, you become a prey to all kinds of vice and corruption of morals. You're too grand now to do anything. Why wasn't you a Jewess born, and then nothing you went through would have taken the love of economy out of you. I suppose you've seen such grand things that nothing here seems good. Perhaps you'd like plate-glass in the kitchen window, and a silver stewpan for the potatoes, and an eider-down petticoat, and a dado round the walls of the scullery?'

'He who has seen the sea doesn't call every puddle a lake,' said Joanna. 'I'd rather live in one of the Duke's cottages with deal tables and clean plates than among your valuables, allowed only to use what is worthless. No, master,' added Joanna, looking round, 'it has done me good to go away. I've seen a bit of a new world, and I am wiser than I was. You can't get a shirt off a naked man, nor feathers off a toad, so I do not expect of you to let me have everything new and bright, but I will have things sound and clean.'

'Whither are you going now?' he asked, as she made a movement towards the stairs.

'I am going after my flowers,' she answered; 'I want to see how they are. I've thought of them and longed to see them again, and they are about the only things here I have cared to see once more. I'll tell you another thing. Get the sack of shavings from under the counter, and empty it in the cupboard under the stairs, where I keep my kindling. I'll sleep in the shop no more. I'll have a proper bed and a room to myself. I am eighteen; in another year mother will redeem me; if not, I shall redeem myself, my own way.' Then she ascended the stairs.

Lazarus struggled out of his chair. Having his hands in his pockets, and sinking deeper through the place where the seat had been, he was nipped, and could not extricate himself with ease. He shook his head, and, when his hands were free, withdrew them from his pockets, and rubbed his frowsy chin. 'What democratic ideas are afloat!' he said. 'What will the world come to!'

Then he seated himself on the flour-barrel. 'She'll be too proud to occupy this place of honour,' said he, 'where she's

squatted time out of mind. I made a sad mistake plunging her in the whirlpool ; now she'll never be to me what she was—she'll be exacting in her food, for one thing. That reminds me, I have not had my dinner. I'll go and get something at the shop over the way.'

When Joanna came down, to her surprise she saw that the Jew had put a beefsteak pie and a plate of cheesecakes on the table, as well as a jug of porter. He had been across the street, and procured these delicacies. After a struggle with himself, he made the purchases, both because he was hungry himself, and because he was afraid of losing Joanna's services unless he treated her better. The contrast between her life at Court Royal Lodge and the Golden Balls, Barbican, was too dreadful not to shock her ; he resolved to bridge the chasm with beefsteak pie and cheesecakes.

'There, there, my child,' he said ; 'you see how I love you, and how glad I am to have you home. If you had given me earlier notice I would have had better fare ready for you ; as it is, I have run out and spared no expense to provide you with dainties. Sit down, bring a chair from upstairs—two, one for me, I can endure that bottomless affair no longer, and tell me what of my business you have done at Court Royal.'

Joanna was mollified by what she saw. 'I thank you,' she said ; 'you have watered my plants whilst I have been away. I thank you.'

'Don't mention it,' answered the Jew ; 'the water cost nothing. What have you ascertained ?'

'Here is the account,' said the girl, extending to him the note-book Beavis had observed under her hand in the office. 'I was caught taking my extracts, and I got away with difficulty. I lost my dance by it.'

The Jew clutched the book eagerly.

'To-night,' she said, 'is the tenants' ball, and I was to have been there. Lady Grace and Miss Lucy taught me to dance, and I should have been happy—but I was caught over the accounts and had to make off.'

The Jew was immersed in the accounts. He chuckled, and rubbed his knees.

'Past all recovery,' he said, and laughed.

'I do not know that,' said Joanna, helping herself to some pie. 'The Marquess is going to marry an heiress, tremendously wealthy, and that will set the property afloat again.'

‘What—what is that?’ exclaimed the Jew, starting up with almost a scream.

‘There is a leathery coffee-planter come home from Ceylon with a pale daughter. Their name is Rigsby. A match has been made up between the Marquess of Saltcombe and Miss Rigsby. I don’t suppose he cares much for her; but she is worth a vast sum of money, and the steward, Mr. Worthivale, calculates to clear the property with her fortune. If you’ve got some of the mortgages, it is all right. You’ll have the money.’

‘I do not want the money. I will not be paid off!’ cried the Jew, dashing his hands against his forehead.

Joanna took some more beefsteak pie. ‘That is the first time I have heard you decline money,’ she said dryly. ‘What do you want? Not the property? Not to be a great landlord? Not to pig in Court Royal?’

‘I will refuse the money. I will keep my grip on them.’

Joanna poured herself out some stout.

‘If they choose to clear you off they can. I believe it is Mr. Worthivale’s intention to do so immediately after the marriage has taken place,’ she said.

‘Who are these Rigsbys? Where are they?’

‘I have told you what Mr. Rigsby is. They have taken a house in Plymouth or Stoke. They have taken a house there for the winter.’

‘Do they know the state of affairs?’

‘I cannot tell. I have not talked with them. I have found out a great deal. You cannot expect me to see into people’s heads as if they were water-bottles. It is only cheap-jacks who expose all their contents to the public.’

‘Is this Rigsby a fool to sink his fortune in redeeming land which is daily depreciating in value?’

‘I do not think he is a fool. He does not look like it.’

‘Joanna! this spoils all my schemes. I have toiled and spun to get my web round them; and now are they to escape me? I could knock my brains out against the wall to think it.’

‘Why should you wish the family harm? They are good people, a long way above such goodness as you or I could aspire to. They are loved and respected by all who know them. They hurt no one, and bless many. I am glad that there is a chance of their recovery.’

‘I do not care for my money. I want to have them down, down under my feet.’

‘Then I will help you no more. What harm have they done you?’

‘The worst, the deadliest harm of all.’

‘And you are moving against them out of personal revenge? I thought all you wanted was to be sure of your money.’

‘I will tell you all—then you may judge if I have cause to love them; if I desire to spare them.’

Joanna laid aside her knife and fork; she was interested now, and alarmed. She was afraid to think that she had been working for the downfall of that dear Lady Grace whom she regarded above every mortal being.

‘As you say, you are no longer a child. You are a woman, so you can hear the whole story. I was married eight years ago to Rachel; she was seventeen, and beautiful. She was very fond of theatrical performances; her mother had been on the stage, and it ran in the blood. Our people, leastways our Jewish girls, take to the stage as ducks to water, and as Jewish men to business. I married her on that day I spoke of, when I ate a meringue that cost fourpence. At that time the Marquess of Saltcombe was in the army, and with his regiment at Plymouth. He and some other officers got up amateur theatricals, for some charitable purpose nominally, really for their own entertainment. There was difficulty about filling the ladies’ parts. They tried a professional, but she was not good-looking enough, or a stick, I do not recollect which, and so my wife was asked to assist. I objected, and we had a quarrel. She was headstrong and took her own way. We did not run smoothly together. It was with us broad and narrow gauge running over the same line; constant hitches, nothing to time, an occasional smash, and then a block. I suppose the performances went off to general satisfaction. I believe a hundred pounds was cleared for the charitable institution, but that did not concern me. What did concern me was the conduct of my wife; she got more estranged from me than before, and the end was she left me and went abroad with the Marquess.’

‘Did you go after her?’ asked Joanna.

‘Not I. They went to the Island of Sicily—to Palermo. It would not have cost me a halfpenny less than fifty pounds to have gone in pursuit. My business would have suffered. In the time I would have been absent I might have turned over three hundred pounds. Besides, what was the good? I couldn’t take her back. Was not that a dreadful thing, Joanna?’

‘I am not surprised at anyone running away from you. I suppose you fed her on cold artichokes, and made her drink Ems water.’

‘I did not,’ said Lazarus angrily. ‘I treated her as I ought. I know my duty. A queen is a queen; a pawn is a pawn.’

‘Go on with your story,’ said the girl. ‘What happened after that?’

‘To me?’

‘I know without your telling me what happened to you. You settled deeper into dirt and drudgery.’

‘As for her and the Marquess,’ Lazarus continued, ‘they were soon separated. His uncle, the Lord Ronald Eveleigh, went out after them as hard as he could. What took place between them I do not know; but I know the end was that the Marquess returned to England, left the army, and settled at Court Royal. What became of Rachel I never heard. She took care not to communicate with me, and I did not trouble myself to inquire after her. Whether she is on the stage or at the bottom of the sea is one to me. We have not met since, but I have a sort of idea she has taken to the theatre as her profession. It suited her tastes; she was fond of dress and display, and excitement, and was vain of her beauty. The Golden Balls did not agree with her; the Barbican, and the smell of Sutton Pool, and the life in a shop were all distasteful; besides, she never took keenly to me.’

‘Did you love her very much?’

‘Of course I did. She was young and beautiful, and I had never cared for any woman before. We might have been so happy,’ sighed the Jew, ‘and had a family to attend to the business; a girl to mind the kitchen, another to turn the old coats; and a boy would have been mighty useful to me in the shop and at my office up in town.’

‘Do you love her still?’

‘I know this: I hate the Marquess mortally,’ he said. ‘He has spoiled my life, he has taken from me my wife, has made a home to be no home at all, and has robbed me of every hope in the future.’

‘But why do you try to drag down those who have never offended you—the Duke, and Lady Grace, and Lord Ronald?’

‘I cannot touch him apart from them. They are all tied in one bundle, and must go together. You can see that, I suppose, by the light of reason.’

Joanna was silent.

Then the Jew looked round at the table and growled. 'A precious big hole you've eaten in the beefsteak pie, and gobbled up three-quarters of the cheesecakes. I hope you are satisfied at last, eh ?'

'No, I am not.'

'What more do you want, next ?' he asked sneeringly.

'I want to go to a dance, and till I have been at a ball I shall not be satisfied—there.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PLAYBILL.

MR. LAZARUS left the house in the afternoon, and Joanna was alone. She at once set to work to make the kitchen tidy. She scoured the grease and rust from the pans, she washed the table, she sandpapered the fire-irons, she carried all the broken crockery to the ash-heap and smashed it up there, then replaced the pieces with sound articles from the stores above. She knew where there was a glazier's diamond, with it she cut a pane, she made her own putty, and reglazed the broken window.

Then she went upstairs to an attic room, with a pail of water, soap, and a scrubbing-brush, and washed the floor. She took up, piece by piece, a small iron bed, and put it together in the room ; she fitted it with mattress, blankets, sheets, and coverlet. She dragged up a washhand-stand, and hung a looking-glass against the wall. She carried up a chair and a towel-horse, and then looked round with triumph. She had made for herself a very decent bedroom. One article of furniture was wanting—a chest of drawers. This she did not convey to her room, partly because she had nothing of her own to put in the drawers, and partly because it was too heavy for her to move unassisted. In the window she set her precious pot of lilies of the valley.

Then, tired with her journey and exertion, she seated herself on the bed, rested her head in both hands, and her elbows on her knees, and gave way to tears.

The contrast between the cleanliness and comfort of the Lodge and the dirt and disorder of the Golden Balls was too great not to make itself felt. She had gone on in one weary round of drudgery before because she knew of nothing different, now she

had seen a better mode of life, and the old was insupportable ; a return to it, unaltered, impossible. This she let Lazarus understand. She would work for him as hard as before, but she would insist on being treated properly.

But her own condition was not that which disturbed Joanna ; that which troubled her was the knowledge that she had been made use of by her master to work mischief against a family she had learned to respect. Of the Duke, indeed, she knew little, except what she had heard, but that had impressed her more than she acknowledged to herself. His greatness, the deference with which all regarded him—the way in which he was looked to as the source of all benefits, as the one who was the mainstay of the social order, as the one to whom, in cases of dispute, the ultimate appeal lay—this had formed an atmosphere of public opinion which she had inhaled, and which had nourished in her respect. She had seen little of Lord Ronald, but she had heard him spoken of as a man of strict integrity and perfect guilelessness. She had seen and spoken with the Marquess. Her box was unpacked. On the chimney-piece stood the canary yellow Dresden cup and saucer he had given her. Once he had come to his sister's room whilst she was having a dancing lesson, had recognised and spoken kindly to her. She could not feel towards him other than friendly regard.

‘As for running away with Rachel,’ she mused, ‘I dare swear Rachel wanted to be run away with. If I had been the wife of Lazarus, I’d have done the same, have run with him to Palermo or Hong Kong—anywhere to be rid of Lazarus and the Barbican. To be married and to be pawned are two totally different cases,’ argued the girl. ‘To be married one gives consent, and if the situation don’t suit, you leave it ; but pawned is another matter—mother did that, and I can’t run away. She must come with the ticket and release me. One would be wickedness, the other would not.’

Lady Grace she knew and loved as she loved no one else. She was miserable at the thought that she had been acting towards her with ingratitude, that Lady Grace might be able with justice one day to reproach her for having ill-repaid the kindness shown her. What would Lady Grace think of her now ! of the way in which she had left her situation ? Would she be told that she was detected at the account-books ? Joanna’s bosom heaved, her face was crimson, her cheeks stained with tears. She could

not, she would not, leave the dear, good lady troubled with thoughts that she was ungrateful.

Joanna stood up, washed her face, and went downstairs. She entered the shop, and looked about for a little wooden box. When she had found one to her mind, she lined it with cotton-wool, and placed in it her necklace of Roman pearls. Then she wrote a letter in what she knew was servant-maid English, which she folded and fastened up in the box with the pearls. This was the letter :

‘ For dear Lady Grace,—This is a present from her devoted, loving, faithful servant, Joanna. Joanna knows very well that it is not worthy of her acceptance (it cost only 2*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* second-hand), but nevertheless she hopes Lady Grace Eveleigh will condescend to accept it, as Joanna has nothing in the world else except what she stands up in, and the pink silk dress which is spoiled. Joanna takes this opportunity of informing your ladyship that I didn’t run away from my place, nor misbehave myself any way, but was summoned home on *urgent business*. Joanna will never, never, never forget and cease to love dear, sweet Lady Grace, and she begs to inform her ladyship that I value my pot of lily of the valley above every treasure the world contains.’

The girl’s mind was relieved when she had written and fastened up this letter in the box. Then she directed the case, and as she had a few coppers still in her pocket, she was able to post and register it. Whilst she ran to the post-office, she left the shop locked. On her return she found a billsticker at the door, trying to get in.

‘ All right,’ he said, ‘ I don’t want to pawn nothing. Will y’ take a bill and place it in the winder, please.’

He handed Joanna a bill, and went his way.

Lazarus was accommodating in the matter of bills of this description. Notices of Missionary Meetings, Harvest Festivals, a Circus, Services of Song, Ethiopian Serenaders, Prayer-meetings, dramatic performances, all went into his window promiscuously. He argued that folks might be attracted to read the bills and then see and fancy an article lying adjacent exposed for sale, a watch, a china figure, a church-service, a pair of opera-glasses, Baxter’s ‘ Saints’ Rest,’ a Methodist hymnal, some old lace, a bicycle, or the portrait of an ancestor. Accordingly Joanna accepted the bill, and, before placing it in the window, spread it on the counter, and read it.

The bill was a theatrical notice. It announced that the dis-

tinguished Polish actress, Mlle. Palma Kaminski, of the Court Theatre, Warsaw, who had created such enthusiasm in London by her abilities, was about to favour Plymouth with her presence, assisted by a corps of artists, all of eminence only inferior to her own.

The first performance would be a revival of Shakespeare's tragedy of 'Romeo and Juliet,' to be performed the ensuing week.

Joanna had never been to a play, but she was a greedy devourer of playbills. To her imagination, nothing—hardly a ball—could surpass the delight of a dramatic performance. She had read plays that had come into the shop—old comedies, tragedies, modern farces, and had formed an idea of what a theatre was, but Lazarus had never allowed her the pleasure of seeing a performance, even from the gallery.

Whilst she was studying the bill, suddenly Lazarus burst into the shop with livid face. He saw what she was reading, seized it, and crumpled it in his hands.

'Why do you do that?' asked Joanna.

'I have seen her,' gasped the Jew. 'She is here—in Plymouth.'

'Seen whom—Lady Grace?'

'I have seen her—Rachel. She has dared to come here!'

'What has she come here for? Does she want to return to you? If so, she's a fool.'

'This is she,' he said, opening out the bill he had crushed, and with trembling finger he pointed to the name. 'She calls herself Palma Kaminski, but she is Rachel Lazarus. A Pole! She is nothing of the sort; she was born on Ratcliff Highway, and bred in Princes Street, Leicester Square.'

'Are you going to reclaim her, or kill yourself, like Romeo, because she is lost to you?'

'I do not know what I shall do. I am in a maze,' gasped the Jew. 'I'd serve her bad if I knew how. I'd beat her brains out if it weren't against the law. Where is the liberty of the subject, I'd like to know, as is so boasted of in this precious British empire? Ah! Joanna, I wish I could get her here and put her to sleep in the press bed, and shut it up when she was sound. The coroner and jury would be sure to find 'accidental death,' and one could have a raffle of half-a-crown a share for the press-bed afterwards, and make a lot of money. I've known five pounds got out of a rope a man hanged himself with. The English lower orders are passionately attached to crime; they like to read about

it, and talk about it, and think about it, and relish it in every way. If you come to consider, Joanna, what a dreary world this would be without crime to season it! It would be like a dinner of cold beef without pickles. There'd be no yellow novels on the railway bookstalls, no sensational dramas on the boards; nothing but politics in the papers. I believe there wouldn't be any pawn shops. I'd like to know where we should be, we Jews, Joanna, in such a world as that. There would be no place for us at all. We must be thankful for things as we find them. The world without wickedness in it, and one with it, would be, to my taste, the difference between still hock and sparkling Moselle.'

'I reckon,' said Joanna, 'that in such a place as Kingsbridge, where all is goodness and kindness, and thought of one another, you'd be out of place like a rook on a frosty morning when the worms are in their holes.'

'They've hoodwinked you, like all those who come near them,' said Lazarus. 'But I can't talk of them. I must think of Rachel. Give me the paper.' He drew the bill from Joanna, who had smoothed it out on the counter. 'Kaminski! What a name! to change the beautiful Lazarus for an outlandish name like that, and she was Moses before I married her. To my mind, Joanna, our British aristocracy is like a scene on a stage, very beautiful to look at, but there is a lot hid away behind very shabby and very bad, of which most folk see and know nothing. You've looked on the grand Kingsbridge House like a young playgoer; all is beautiful, and innocence, and splendour. I know the other side. There is the great burden of debt, fresh loans, that scandal of the Marquess and Rachel. The world knows nothing of all this, but there it is.'

'I should like so much to go to a theatre,' said Joanna with a sigh.

Lazarus considered a moment, then his face lightened; he passed his fingers through his hair, ruffling it on end, giving him a wild look. 'You shall, Joanna; I promise you.'

'The gallery is only sixpence.'

'You shan't go in the gallery.'

'What? Stand outside, where a place costs nothing?'

'No, Joanna, you shall have the most expensive place in the whole theatre, that will cost two or three pounds.'

The girl stared at him. Then he smoothed down his hair, and elaborately and noisily blew his nose. He was excited.

‘Yes, you shall. I will go also.’

‘When? At doomsday?’

‘No, we will go together, and sit in the stage-box, and see Romeo and Juliet.’ Joanna clapped her hands.

‘You shall see Rachel—Kaminski indeed. If she didn’t like Moses, why not condense it to Moss; if she didn’t like Lazarus, why not pull it out into St. Lazare? I’ve known some of our names turned about till you can’t recognise them. Levi and Levison, for instance, who’d know them again as Lewis and Lawson? Even Cohen I’ve known altered into Colquhoon, and but for his nose you’d have thought the man a Scotchman.’

‘You will really let me go?’

‘I will take you myself. We shall be right above her, face her, and see if we do not spoil her play. Joanna, I’ll heap on you all the jewelry in the shop, and you shall blaze in her eyes with diamonds and rubies and sapphires, and you shall have the most splendid dress of silk or satin money can buy; an old second-hand affair won’t do. The best—if I have to send to Worth at Paris for it.’

Joanna looked at him in amazement. Had he lost his senses?

‘Then she’ll see you and me behind, and, sure as she is a daughter of Israel, it will cut her to the heart to think she has forfeited all that heap of jewelry.’

‘But what will she think of me?’

‘I do not know, nor care; she’ll never suppose you are my maid of all work, a pawned piece of goods.’

‘I don’t believe a proper lady would pile on jewelry that way,’ mused Joanna. ‘I heard Lady Grace and Miss Lucy say something about real ladies being known by their quiet dressing. I can’t imagine Lady Grace dressed like that, even at a play.’

‘But you are not Lady Grace,’ argued the Jew. ‘That makes all the difference. She is at the top, and can afford to dress quietly. You are at the bottom, and must dress extravagantly, or you remain what you are—nothing.’

The girl considered; then she said, ‘Miss Rigsby will be there, I am sure she will. She will be all of a blaze. It will be killing fun just to outblaze her. I’ll put on everything I can, and I wish I’d two necks like an Austrian eagle to be able to put on more still.’

(To be continued.)

LEAR'S FOOL.

WHILE taking that nonpareil of Fools for our theme, it may not be amiss to say a few words on Shakspearean humour as displayed in those unique characters ; for, though each one of them is so individually distinct, they all belong to a certain line of parts, which have ever puzzled the commentator, attracted the student, and perplexed the player, and yet will well repay intelligent reflection and careful study. For there is a two-fold charm in Shakspearean *dramatis personæ*; in the first place, to regard them as creatures of imagination truly, but made so real to us that we feel as if they were all personally known ; and secondly, to consider them as objects for stage representation. We must know and understand them thoroughly ere we can attempt to impersonate them, and not only study their individual lines, but every shade of relation in which they stand to the rest of the play. These poor Fools have been sadly misrepresented and misunderstood from time immemorial, while some have solved the difficulty by the simple expedient of cutting them out altogether.

Yet there is nothing so fresh and evergreen as these humorous character-parts ; when the turgid wit of Ben Jonson or the licentious rallies of a Wycherley in a later century are obsolete, and when our modern farcical comedies seem but writ for the present hour, shallow and evanescent for the most part, audiences will still be found to laugh at the gravediggers, the immortal constables, or Falstaff, *et cetera omnes*, and the lower the class in the social scale—pit and gallery rather than stalls—the readier is their aptitude to seize the time-honoured points, while a select few of the fashionable world may foolishly say, ‘We want something funny—not Shakspeare’! As if the rollicking humours of the above-named were not far funnier, in the highest sense of the word, than many of the ephemeral pieces that so tickle our palates at the present time. Funnier because they have a human interest in themselves, well assorted with the play as a whole, while we generally find that the third or last act of these mere farces hangs fire from want of a sufficient basis of real interest. The remark of Gay in the last century aptly applies to the present time, who complains ‘that a great number of dramatic entertain-

ments are not comedies but five-act farces.' And it was that age who could see no wit in Lear's Fool. Wit so intricately interwoven with pathos that we are puzzled whether to laugh or cry—wit as recklessly overflowing as Falstaff's, yet showing us the warm sad heart beneath—showing us the truth of which Shelley sang, that 'Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught.' And it is this which endears him to us, just as that one touch of nature in Falstaff's death wins our pity for even so gross a sinner, or as we appreciate the dry jests of Touchstone all the more because we are drawn to him by his faithful attachment to his young mistresses. It is this marvellous blending of humour and pathos in startling yet not unnatural juxtaposition which is the glory of Shakspeare, and in spite of the failure of many a generation to understand it—in spite of all mutilations—all attempts to smother it, it has lived through all vicissitudes to burst forth with renewed vitality.

This is an age of restorations; and, to anyone who looks back upon the history of the British drama, he will find it has caught the same moving spirit which has impelled our Church—in fact Church and Stage is no newfangled conjunction, they have both been unconsciously moving on the same lines for the last fifty or sixty years; the Tractarian movement and Macready's revivals were nearly contemporary. 'Scrape off your plaster! Awake from the unaccountable mania which seized our respected ancestors for whitewashing their churches as well as their Shakspeare.' 'Restore the primitive beauties of fresco and carving in our puritanically defaced temples of worship. Clear off and purge from our Shakspeare the disfigurements from the bedaubing brush of a Tate, a Cibber, or, alas! of a Garrick, under the approval of Dr. Johnson.' Such have been the two calls to which there has been a prolonged response—a gradually swelling but undying echo.

We are emerging from a long darkness of depraved taste to an era which has given and is giving us Shakspeare pure and undefiled, just as the Church has awakened from its long slumbers of dullness and whitewash to restore the primitive beauties of our services, as well as of our Church architecture. Yet all honour to those dramatic giants of old, for in their own generation they were the precursors of reformation—so much alive to the true beauties of Shakspeare, that their strange perversity of blindness in understanding him is all the more astonishing. Garrick restored

his dramas to their proper position at Drury Lane, performing annually some eighteen to twenty of them; whereas in Charles II.'s time only six or eight were played in twenty years, and only about six or eight annually under Willes, Booth, and Quin—yet even that might put our generation to shame. ‘Like a hawk,’ a contemporary magazine says of Garrick, ‘who flies directly at his prey, he seized the most finished and difficult parts of our great bard, and made them his own’—that is, cut and altered them according to fancy, omitting the gravediggers from *Hamlet*, and inflicting on the stage for the next fifty years Tate’s miserable perversion of *King Lear*, till Macready, to his honour, put on the original *Lear* and *reinstated his Fool*.

The more is the pity for Garrick’s unaccountable bad taste, inasmuch as he was perhaps the finest representative of what was left of *King Lear* that had ever been seen, or, we are afraid, that ever will be seen. The reason why this grandest of all plays was so long in abeyance was its too painful appropriateness to the unhappy condition of King George III., and it was on that account unrepresented. Edmund Kean must have been superb in the cursing scenes, but we should doubt if on the whole it was entirely suited to his line, or rather that he was unequal to its sustained pathos and varying moods, and he still worked on Tate’s lines. At length came Macready’s revival of *Lear with the Fool*, yet he was almost staggered at the attempt. He notes in regard to it: ‘My opinion of the introduction of the Fool is that, like many such terrible contrasts in poetry and painting, in acting representation it will fail of effect; it will either weary and annoy, or distract the spectator. I have no hope of it, and think that at the last we shall be obliged to dispense with it.’ ‘I described the sort of fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced boy that he should be,—Bartley observed that a woman should play it. I caught at the idea, and instantly exclaimed, “Miss P. Horton is the very person.”’¹ And so, in spite of his first despair, this makeshift of giving it to a woman proved, as we have been told by an eyewitness, very effective, Miss Horton² having a good voice for the songs, masculine in its depth, and a boyish manner—in fact, the

¹ *Macready Reminiscences*, vol. ii.

² Afterwards the well-known Mrs. German Reed. The part was subsequently very successfully played by Mr. Henry Scharf—when a young man—to Mr. Phelps’s *King Lear* at Sadler’s Wells Theatre. Mr. Scharf also played *Touchstone*, *Feste*, &c., and was a genuine comedian gifted with the requisite good voice.

Fool was as great a success as Macready himself in the person of King Lear, of which *rôle* he appears to have been equally desponding, as the following notes in his Diary show:

'I scarcely know how I acted the part—I did not satisfy myself.' 'Lay down and tried to think of Lear.' One thing that gave greater effect to his Lear than that of any previous actor was his playing it in a long regal robe, thereby giving the dignity that should be so characteristic of one who is even in his madness 'every inch a king.'

From the above extracts we begin to realise how difficult—how great a part that of the Fool is—almost harder to give a satisfactory representation of than Lear himself. We cannot agree in thinking with Macready that the contrast is too terrible if properly given, as we shall see later on suggested by the great commentator Gervinus, but that, on the contrary, it serves to heighten the grandeur of Lear—to make the tragedy more vivid, and if at times it does distract one's attention, it comes as a relief for a moment from the strain of watching the prolonged agony of Lear. The one answer to Macready's doubt whether it ever could be played is that it has stood its ground ever since, and no one now would accept a revival of King Lear without his Fool. Not that we can see any player who would be likely to give us a wholly satisfactory rendering. The late comparative failure to catch the true spirit of Shakspearean humorous and character-parts in 'Twelfth Night,' and we might add Mr. Hare's very ineffective rendering of Touchstone, show us that, though we have a few actors who can give us his tragedy fairly, intelligently and picturesquely, if not greatly, we still lack the requisite sister art which ever in Shakspeare walks hand in hand with the graver muse. Where is our Tarleton, Kempe, or, in later days, a Fawcett? That excellent representative of Bottom, Falstaff, or Malvolio, the late Samuel Phelps, seems to have ended the line of Shakspearean comedians. As the age of restoration advances, perhaps, we may still hope for some to catch the inspirations of the past, and give us the Fools and clowns of Shakspeare. Reformer and almost new founder of the British drama as he became, no more wonderful reformation did he accomplish than that of moulding the rude clowns of the previous era, who appeared only to 'set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too'—mere excrescences, buffoons filling the intervals between acts as our orchestra does now—into his immortal Fools, part and parcel of the piece, men of distinct individual character

and sympathies, culminating in that most pathetic and sublime one—that missing link, we may call him, between Tragedy and Comedy—Lear's Fool! Shakspeare knew well the old adage of one step between the sublime and the ridiculous, and delighted to go to the very verge, yet without overstepping the line between them—‘he o'erstepped not the modesty of nature.’ Terrible contrasts—‘risky business,’ *i.e.*, to excite a laugh in the wrong place—are always the bane of an actor, but let him trust himself in the bold but experienced hands of that great actor-manager, Shakspeare, and he need not fear. The Fool and Lear are terrible contrasts truly, but not on that account to be unrepresentable.

The more we look into it the less unnatural it will appear, till at length, in the midst of apparent harshness, we catch in the concord of rude sounds the true heartfelt harmony, majestically vibrating throughout under the guidance of that master mind who owned no rule but nature's changeless plan, and gave us men and women as he found them in life—in the streets of London, in the green lanes of Stratford—not a set of lay figures on stilts of equal jingling lines like those which Corneille and Racine fashioned for the French drama.

We come across terrible contrasts every day of our lives—more incongruous couples, with far less bond of sympathy between them, whether man and wife, or friend and friend, than Lear and his poor Fool. If they are ill-assorted in the mere matter of years, what is it? They are brief at the most. We have—

Nor youth nor age,
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep
Dreaming on both.

A life may be utterly wasted and ‘used up’ at thirty as at eighty, or, as in the tragedy before us, the usual course of life be inverted, and the old man Lear retain the fiery passions of hot-blooded youth—still be young in his intemperate vigour—while the young man, his Fool, old enough to have found out the hollowness of life, become coldly wise by bitter experience. Or again, if it appear strange and incongruous to us to have always a professional Fool at our side, in the most grave and critical moments as well as in our lighter moods, yet it is a custom that has had its survival in the conversational wits of the last generation—Sheridan, Sydney Smith, or Theodore Hook, the Yoricks of their age, who ‘were wont to set the table in a roar;’ and even

in our own time some remnant of the Fool still exists, only now he attends not on the Sovereign but on the majesty of the House of Commons.

Yet though the players have failed to embody and fully realise this unique character, not so the discriminating minds who have poured out their wealth of commentary and results of careful study, such as Coleridge, Gervinus, Knight, or Professor Dowden. These have lent their aid in the restoration of Shakspeare's characters from the defamation of Grub Street scribblers, who delighted to smother or obscure a plain meaning beneath a cloud of words. The heavy roll of the Johnsonian thunder has been lifted by the lightning flashes from such a mind as Coleridge, and the bright sunlight of other expositors, who show us the whole broad system on which he worked, and, keeping that well in view, we need not start away from 'terrible contrasts' when they present themselves.

✓ Lear's Fool shares his anomalous character with one or two prominent ones, notably with 'the Duke living in exile' of 'As You Like It,' but in this instance the want of a name does not seem felt, for he is so intimately associated with his master that he hardly has a separate existence. He is 'Lear's Fool' from the beginning to the end. Without Lear he would be nothing. Lear without him loses half his force. Now to picture this strange, nameless, fascinating creation, so that he may become to our eyes as vivid a reality as the mad old king himself. In the first place, we venture to doubt if he was quite the fragile, hectic *boy* of Macready's imagination, and though Miss Horton may have succeeded in her difficult task, it by no means follows that it is a suitable one for a woman. That he was beautiful-faced, 'a pretty knave,' and may have been 'hectic' we admit willingly; but several things point to his having reached manhood—youthful manhood, no doubt, precocity beyond his years—but still he had passed the mystic line between boyhood and youth, had arrived anyhow at that vague border-land, 'years of discretion.' The king could never have stood such rebuffs and taken so to heart the reproaches of a mere boy. Because he constantly calls him 'boy' is no more proof of his age than when we term any French waiter 'garçon,' no matter though he should happen to be sixty. In Lear's case it is only a term of endearment, just like 'the dearest chuck' of Macbeth, or the 'excellent wretch' of Othello. It is like 'my lad,' 'pretty knave,' 'sirrah,' which are used as well, and to a man of 'fourscore and

upwards' a youth of twenty-five or thirty would appear a boy in comparison. But note that none of the others venture to call him 'boy'; it is 'Fool' with them. Even the haughty Goneril says: 'You, sir, more knave than Fool,' &c., and again, on his exit, 'This man has had good counsel'; while even Lear, in his most earnest moods, calls him 'Fool': 'O Fool, I shall go mad.' 'Go, call my Fool.' 'And my poor Fool is hanged.' And to conclude with a proof of the inaccuracy of the term 'boy,' the Fool himself returns the compliment to Lear—'Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter Fool and a sweet one?' In the second place, his keen insight into character, his common-sense view of looking at things, his distrust of mere words—and, indeed, the coarseness of some of his allusions to women, all militate against the 'boy' theory. The king's jester was, as a rule, a full-grown man, like Henry VIII.'s Will Somers, and, in short, as all the other Fools in Shakspeare are. We never think of Touchstone as a boy.

It may not be without interest while upon this point, as well as to help our imaginations as to a Fool's appearance, to give the following list of Henry V.'s jester's wardrobe, which by its amplexness and mention of boots, spurs, and a servant, seem to point to that of a man's. (From the original Latin, translated in Rymer's 'Fœdera.'

To be allowed and granted to William, the King's Fool, for his apparel, gowns, and tabards for him and his servant, & for making & furring divers garments, hoods, boots, doublets, robes, linen, and divers other necessaries at sundry times, viz., for the winter season against the Feasts of Christmas, Circumcision, and Epiphany, & for the summer season against the Feasts of Easter, Whitsuntide and divers other :—

- 1½ ells scarlet cloth.
- 3 ells of broadcloth, scarlet in grain.
- 25½ ells of coloured broadcloth.
- 8 ells of coloured narrow cloth.
- 6 ells of narrow blanket.
- 136 skins of Calabrian fur.
- 12 ermins.
- 6 skins, 2 vent of purple menevere.
- 3 skins of black boug (sable?).
- 24 ells of Flanders linen cloth.
- 12 pairs of stockings.
- 2 pairs of boots.
- 2 pairs of spurs.

Well, then, granted him to be a young man with a handsome face and 'a mellifluous voice,' it is all the more touching a picture

to find that he is a youth who has utterly lost the fresh glow, the ready trustfulness, the devotion and belief in a gentle word or a sweet face—the envied rights of youth emerging from boyhood ; but this poor Fool has been nurtured under no tender auspices ; he has been plunged headlong into a rough, boisterous world, where he has soon lost that innocence which has once been given to us all, ‘and only once’ : that simplicity which has looked at the unbarred gates of life as admitting us into a hidden Paradise, which we eagerly enter with no afterthought, no suspicion that all is not so fair as it looks, entering with those rays of a heavenly dawn still lingering on us, and ‘*by that vision splendid*’ are ‘*on our way attended*’ ; but

At length the man beholds it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

And to this stage has the Fool come—‘*the common day*.’ He has witnessed, perchance, that fading of sunrise hues, has been cruelly awakened from ‘*love’s young dream*,’ that crushing of bright hopes, when our eyes are open to the shams, hypocrisies, and coldness of heart around. He bears ‘*the heart once crushed less quick to rise again*,’ and the warm-hearted, affectionate youth becomes the keen cynic who sees at once the hollowness of the two daughters’ professions, the folly of the king’s injustice, who rails at love and woman in the coarsest terms.

F. He’s mad that trusts in a wolf’s tameness, a boy’s love, a horse’s health, or a whore’s oath. (Act iii. sc. 6.)

F. No heretics burned but wenches’ suitors. (Act iii. sc. 2.)

F. There was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass. (Ibid.)

These and such-like railings may be excused to one who had ever before him those hideous examples of womanhood, the sister fiends. But yet, midst all this heartlessness, folly, riot, and corruption, he is quick enough to see the sterling worth of the silent Cordelia ; he retains through good and evil the cherished memory of that pure, deep-loving, still water, the fair Cordelia ; and it is her image that keeps him faithful to his trust, and brings out all that is good and true in his nature. ‘*Since my young lady’s going into France the Fool hath much pined away*,’ is the first we hear of him. It is the key-note to his character. He may be one whose ‘*blessèd*’ (or, as some would read, *blasted*) ‘*youth becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms Of palsied eld*’—i.e. has become old before his time, a young man devoid of passion by

nature, like Horatio, or crushed out of him by bitter experience, as we have hinted before ;—and yet withal he is the true friend to that ‘passion’s slave,’ his master king, and shines out as the redeeming light of affection and faithfulness even unto death mid a world of turbulent convulsions, of upheavings of nature, of utter darkness and despair. Truly there is a surpassing nobleness in that close clinging of Kent and the poor Fool, in spite of a conscious prevision of impending ruin, that wins our admiration, and is the one bright spot upon the lurid picture in the absence of Cordelia. This rude, unswerving self-sacrifice stands out stedfastly when ‘the bond’ is snapped between father and child. ‘The king falls from the bias of nature—we have seen the best of our times,’ cries that other aged sufferer, Glo’ster. ‘Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us with disquiet to our graves.’ Surely, here the rough-and-ready Kent and the poor Fool form, not a terrible, but a glorious and unexampled contrast.

It is worthy of note to observe how Touchstone, Feste (the clown in ‘All’s Well that Ends Well’), and Peter are all more or less under the influence and attached to the most refined creations among Shakspearean women. The rougher and coarser their nature the more magical is the change ; and we forgive the coarseness of the clown for his chivalrous devotion to the graces of pure womanhood. Thus Celia says of Touchstone, who is called a ‘clownish’ and ‘roynish’ fool—

He’ll go along o’er the wide world with me ;
Leave me to woo him.

And thus the loss of Juliet awakens in the breast of that still more clownish knave Peter an outburst of heartfelt grief. So once more, and in a deeper key, we learn that ‘the Fool has much pined away since my young lady’s going into France.’ ‘No more of that,’ replies Lear ; ‘I have noted it well.’ He is a standing reproach to the king already before he has appeared on the scene, and has awakened in him that first pang of remorse on which he never ceases to harp from his first entry, when he says—

F. Why, this fellow has banish’d two of his daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. (Act i. sc. 4.)

until he soon wrings from Lear that muttered ‘*I did her (Cordelia) wrong.*’ Their two natures are alike in this, that, having

once got an idea of wrong into their minds, they never leave go of it ; they brood over it—Lear over his own wrongs, the Fool over Cordelia's.

But before the Fool enters let us pause to ask a question which has often occurred to me—Why was not he in the first scene ? why does he only enter now when the deed is done ? Is it not a curious coincidence that he was not at the king's side at first, for he never leaves him after his first appearance to the end of his short career ? Wherever he was, I think the motive of keeping him away, in the playwright's point of view, is not hard to fathom. He might have marred the whole plot of the play ; his bitter taunts might have stopped Lear on the brink of his act of folly in dividing the kingdoms ; perhaps he would have succeeded better than Kent in his pleadings for Cordelia—he has always more moral influence over the king than Kent afterwards ; or else, like Touchstone, he would have shared Cordelia's exile rather than see her unjustly cast off, and Lear, in his distressful after-scenes, would have lost half his effect. Few people can stand having their most serious resolves and pet schemes turned into ridicule, and it is the Fool and not Kent that touches Lear to the quick, and rouses his better self. In short, Shakspeare wanted the Fool to complete the tragedy, and had he stood by a quiescent spectator of the injustice, his railings would have lost all their force. So at the critical moment he keeps him away. There is another instance of keeping an inconvenient character out of a scene in 'Much Ado about Nothing.' Why is not Antonio, Leonato's brother, at the wedding of his niece, whom he has been so anxious to see married ? Is it not because his headstrong indignation would have repelled the slander at once and challenged Claudio there and then, and so have prevented the Friar's more cautious and elaborate device. Well, the instance before us is still more notable, and we find that the Fool has shunned meeting the unjust father for two days ; but just when Lear is engaging another attendant, Kent, disguised as Caius, he aptly appears, perhaps hastening all the more to prevent being supplanted in his master's affections. He enters with the mocking '*Let me hire him too ; here's my coxcomb.*' Though he never misses an opportunity of turning a laugh against Kent, as we shall see in the next act, when he finds Kent in the stocks, yet it is a friendly rivalry ; they know each other's worth. '*This is not altogether Fool, my lord,*' says

Kent; while the Fool recognises one of his own true sort under the affected sarcasm of

*F. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.
K. Why, Fool?
F. Why, for taking one's part that is out of favour.*

Then he turns from Kent to his master, and, heedless of threats, probes at the very root of the evil, and uses his bitter tongue like a skilful surgeon's knife, thinking it to be the truer kindness to cut deeper as his patient winces under the pain. Thus he rings the changes on that one sore reproach in order to rouse the king to his better feelings, and gall him into recalling Cordelia and reasserting himself in his proper position. This is the object the Fool has set himself, and, if his jests seem almost too heartless, it shows the very earnestness of his well-intentioned but over-reaching aim. Skilfully at the same time, too, he distracts the king with his wayward rhymes to soothe the rankling of the bitter shafts he launches under their covert, as thus—

*L. A pestilent gall to me.
F. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.
L. Do.
F. Mark it, nuncle, &c., &c.*

Then again he harks back with the reminder of—

*F. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?
L. Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.*

(almost repeating his speech to Cordelia in the first scene:—
Cor. Nothing.—L. Nothing can come of nothing.

F. Prythee tell him; so much the rent of his land comes to he'll not believe a Fool.

L. A bitter Fool!

And so on, with many odd metaphors and snatches of song, he goads the king into a fit mood for the encounter with Goneril, not leaving off till he has irritated her too, and thus almost forced on the already smouldering quarrel, which wanted but slight friction to make it kindle. Observe, too, there is a particular grudge between Goneril and this 'all licensed Fool.' She comes on in the previous scene, saying to her steward, 'Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his Fool?'

Evidently the Fool had been chidden for speaking too plain truths of the worth of Goneril and Regan. 'They'll have me whipped for speaking true,' he complains.

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Evidently the Fool had been chidden for speaking too plain truths of the worth of Goneril and Regan. 'They'll have me whipped for speaking true,' he complains.

Wonderful indeed is this fierce battle of words between Lear and Fool against Goneril, the Fool playing the part of light cavalry in warfare ; he gives warning of the enemy's tactics ; he commences the action by a preliminary skirmish, till the enemy advances in force, when he retires to clear the way for the heavy cannonade of Lear's fearful curses, keeping close to his side to support him at any opportunity, and boldly stays behind to cover Lear's retreat with a parting shot. Quick at first is his interchange of shot and shot. Mockingly he retorts on Goneril—

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long
That it had its head bit off by its young.
So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

While Lear seems almost too taken aback to say more than 'Are you our daughter ?'

Gon. Come, sir, I would you would make use of that good wisdom whereof I know you are fraught, and put away these dispositions which transform you from what you rightly are.

Quick the Fool returns to the attack.

*May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse ?
Whoop, Jug, I love thee !*

As if with this wild '*Whoop, Jug !*' he taunts Goneril with her first profession. '*Beyond all manner of so much I love thee.*' Yes, though he was not present he has evidently been well informed of those overdone professions. This line of his should be most marked of all in this scene, for it is the climax that rouses to the quick Lear's swelling indignation. In fierce and incoherently broken sentences he breaks out : 'Doth any here know me ?' &c., &c. ; and in this speech the quarto is evidently to be followed, and not the modern copies of the *folio*, viz. when Lear exclaims : '*Who is it that can tell me who I am ?*' the Fool, and not Lear himself, answers, '*Lear's shadow*', and Lear catches at the sad insinuation : '*I would learn that ; for by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters.*' *F.* '*Which they will make an obedient father.*' The Fool does not allow a pause in the bitter conflict, and even when Lear rushes out, crying to his people, '*Away ! away !*' the Fool remains. Again the king re-enters to launch his final curse, and declare his intention of seeking consolation with Regan and resuming his proper shape. Still the Fool boldly stays to deliver his parting volley, pathetically calling to Lear not to forget him.

'Nuncle Lear! nuncle Lear! tarry and take the Fool with thee!'

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a halter!
So the Fool follows after.

Thus unwittingly hinting at his own fate in the double meaning,
'If my cap would buy a halter.'

Then follows a most touching little scene between the two when the fury of the fight is over, but the deep wound is rankling still in Lear's galled breast; while the Fool still implacably drives home his one purpose, till he wrings out from Lear that 'I did her wrong.' Yet he endeavours pathetically to accomplish that other half of his task, so well described by the 'gentleman' a little further on: he labours 'to outjest his heart-strook injuries,' and at the same time seeks to break the force of the oncoming storm, which he clearly foresees, by breaking to the King the reception he is likely to get from one who will taste, like Goneril, 'as a crab does to a crab.' The remorse he has aroused in Lear never leaves the King even in madness when, '*a sovereign shame so elbows him*,' and '*burning shame detains him from Cordelia*,' '*and by no means he will yield to see his daughter*' (Act iv. sc. 3). Yes! the Fool succeeds in this object too well, but fails to perceive how he overreaches his aim in driving that bitter reflection into the o'erwrought brain of Lear, who, stung by that last sad reproach, '*Thou should'st not have been old before thou had'st been wise*,' realises the shadow of coming insanity, and utters that most pitiful cry, '*Let me not go mad—not mad! sweet heavens! Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!*' This again is brought home to the Fool, in the next act, in that fearful despairing '*O Fool! I shall go mad!*' But though the Fool failed in his self-imposed task, his failure was only in common with that of every good intention in this heartrending tragedy. Kent fails, first, in averting the blow from Cordelia, and then in getting the King to rest patient under his woes; Cordelia fails in her noble endeavours to restore her father's rights; the physician fails in completely restoring his shattered senses; Glo'ster fails in sheltering him. Cordelia says herself—

We are not the first
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst.

And so, too, the Fool loses no merit for failing with these. It was a glorious failure—far better to fail with Cordelia than to triumph with Goneril, Regan, and Edmund—a failure which has its reward elsewhere. ‘Man proposes, God disposes,’ is the motto throughout ; and even when wisdom and goodness are combined, yet in this terrible convulsion they strike out blindly, wildly, hopelessly, not seeing the Providence overhead—‘ the stars which govern our condition,’ as Kent says.

In Act ii. the Fool has his laugh at Kent’s misfortunes, not being without that human weakness of enjoying a rival’s fall and his own superior wisdom. Indeed, he seems so elated at the immediate fulfilment of his forewarning that this daughter would taste ‘as a crab does to a crab,’ that he almost revels in the gathering thunder-clouds of fresh disasters which take his unsuspecting master by surprise. He scoffs at Kent’s dullness of perception, and gives him ironically the piece of worldly wisdom—

Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down hill, lest *it break thy neck* with following it.

(Again foreshadowing his own fate.)

But the great one that goes up hill let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel give me mine again. I would have none but knaves follow it since a fool gives it.

And following this up by the more unselfish choice of his song—

That, sir, which serves and seeks for gain,
And follows but for form,
Will pack when it begins to rain,
And leave thee in the storm.
But I will tarry—the Fool will stay,
And let the wise man fly ;
The knave turns Fool that runs away,
The Fool—no knave, perdy !

Kent. Where learnt you this, Fool ?

F. Not in the stocks, Fool !

is the curt answer. No ; the lesson of duty is not to be learned by fear of punishment, as little as it is by the desire of gain. His was a duty for duty’s sake, which is higher than any instinct ruled by fear or greed—that sense of duty which fixes the soldier to his post, the captain to his ship, in the face of imminent death—that duty which was Nelson’s most stirring watchword, and has ever been the conspicuous characteristic, as well as the pride, of the Englishman century after century, making him fittest of all to rule as well as to obey. Never was there a truer, more

thorough-going Englishman than Shakspeare, and he nobly dared to place this highest perfection of duty for duty's sake in a poor Fool.

In this second and final conflict with the two daughters combined the Fool is silent, mutely despairing at his master's side, till with the fatal 'O Fool, I shall go mad!' Lear staggers for his support, and is almost borne out by him, assisted by the still constant Glo'ster and Kent. This time the Fool tarries not for a parting shot ; the defeat is overwhelming, and he goes out into the storm, fragile and weak of body as he is, into the wild night and the barren heath, 'where the bleak winds do sorely ruffle, and for many miles about there's scarce a bush.' Where the King is, there is his post of duty ; howbeit he is conscious of the impending ruin—conscious, too, that Lear has in great measure brought it on himself by his folly and violence. Yet out he goes to suffer with him, and while the cruel daughters and son-in-law cry—

Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night ;

Lear is left with

None but the Fool, who labours to outjest
His heart-strook injuries.

Then follows that tremendous storm-scene of Act iii., the finest as well as the hardest to render adequately of any in Shakspeare—in fact, the whole play requires a company of giants in talent, and then the three following scenes would tax their powers to the uttermost, more especially the two parts of the Fool and Edgar in his assumed madness. One would expect that in braving the elements it would have been Lear who would suffer most physically, but here the order of things is reversed, and it is the young man who succumbs to the force of the storm, while the old man of fourscore and upwards greets the warring of the heavens as a kindred passion like his own.

*L. This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more.*

He whose heart gave way at the harsh ingratitude of his daughters seems to gain strength in the bare and weaponless conflict with the storm. So the madman is ever physically stronger than the sane, and puts to shame the shivering, cowering youth who had before abashed him in his superior wisdom. Vainly now the Fool entreats him to go in and beg pardon of his daughters ; vainly Glo'ster tries to lead him from his strange companion, 'poor Tom' ; vainly Kent expostulates with him to be patient and seek rest and

shelter. Like a huge wreck torn from its moorings, Lear obeys neither rudder nor sail, but plunges and heaves with the mad impulse of the waves in a night when

Man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the fear.

Yet, though the Fool for a moment loses his philosophy in the breakdown of his fragile physique, he soon recovers his unswerving determination to share Lear's fortunes, and shouts out defiantly his wild songs to the wind, still harping, like his master, on the old theme, the deceitfulness and shallowness of woman. '*For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass.*' All are alike in his experience; they are not worth railing at—forgetting Cordelia for an instant. Such is the lesson he now flings out to Lear, who seems to catch for a moment the spirit of stolid indifference. '*No*,' he cries, '*I will be the pattern of all patience—I will say nothing* ;' till once more he seems to swell and heave with the rolling thunder that makes '*this dreadful pudder o'er our heads.*' Mark how the stage directions for the storm without seem to indicate its unison with the storm within Lear's breast—the short spells of passionate outbreaks, the rumblings and mutterings, with the fitful sobbing and soughing of the wind. It forcibly reminds one of the beautiful description by the player in '*Hamlet*' :—

But as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stands still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hushed as death; anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region.

So, after another pause, with a brief consciousness of growing insanity, Lear pathetically murmurs, 'My wits begin to turn,' and catching sight of his poor shivering Fool, all the warm affection of his nature is roused in those most touching lines, sobbed out in broken sentences—

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy?
Art cold? I am cold myself.

And for his sake he yields to their entreaties to seek shelter:

Where is this straw? Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart that's sorry yet for thee.

That warm, generous heart, that could love as deeply as it could hate, finds the sole object for its outlet in the poor dependant, and in their mutual misery they find the comfort of sympathy.

Both have been bereft of that gentle, sweet influence of Cordelia ; both have learned the one solace—pity, pity akin to love. As the Fool has pitied Lear in his bitter remorse and cruel mental sufferings, so in his turn Lear shows a noble pity for the Fool's physical weakness, which the latter as nobly struggles against, and though the storm still rages, yet with a strained affectation of cheerfulness sings under the shelter of his master's cloak as they go out close hugging each other for warmth :—

He that has and a little tiny wit,
With heigh ho ! the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortune fit,
For the rain it raineth every day.

L. True, boy ! Come, bring us to this hovel.

A picture, truly, to move a heart of steel ! Thus they go out, for one feels convinced that the lines of the Fool that follow—

I'll speak a prophecy ere I go, &c.,

if not an interpolation of the players in the folio, which seems likely, as they are not found in the earlier quarto, are certainly out of place here and devoid of meaning or effect ; perhaps this may be a case where the clown spoke more than was set down for him, 'and that, too, when a most necessary question of the play is to be considered.'

The end of this first storm-scene seems to mark a lull in this hurricane of mind and matter, which is only to break out with more despairing fierceness in the next, where the thunder is still rolling, and, in Kent's words, '*the tyranny of the open night's too rough for nature to endure*' (*storm still*), and so Lear in sympathy refuses to go in—the tempest rumbles and rankles within like the clouds without. Once more the sight of the poor Fool moves him to yield : 'But I'll go in ; in, boy, go first.' How these little touches soften our hearts to the fiery old King ! We forget the violence, the fearful curses, in that thought for his Fool ; and in the next line another delicate touch shows us the reluctance of the latter to leave his master's side even then :

L. Nay, get thee in ; I'll pray and then I'll sleep.

Then the Fool runs out frightened by the discovery of the hovel's pre-occupation by 'poor Tom,' and it is his magnanimous rival in affection, the noble-hearted Kent, who shields and helps him from the unexpected encounter :

K. Give me thy hand. Who's there ?

and both join now in a last vain endeavour to prevent the King catching the infection of madness—‘storm continues,’ is the stage direction—the elements and the tempest in his mind breaks out anew wilder than ever by the accession of forces,—rifting the clouds from east to west,—rending the last bonds of reason. All covering is useless ; reckless is Lear’s mad longing to be

A sharer in their fierce and far delight,

A portion of the tempest.

L. Off, off, you lendings !—come, unbutton here.

And now it is the Fool who has regained his courage, and prevents the last act of unreason ; it is his turn to shelter his master—to protect him against himself ; and Glo’ster with torch arrives in the nick of time to soothe the distracted King. Again there is a lull, and that small, strange knot of weird sufferers once more seek shelter.

The third storm-scene presents one of the finest dramatic creations, short as it is, in the weird combination of the real madman,—the assumed maniac,—and the professional Fool. We cannot do better than quote the words of Gervinus in support of an intelligent appreciation of these terrible contrasts :—‘The scenes in which Lear, on the point of madness, appears in company with Edgar, who feigns madness, and with the Fool, who still endeavours, crushed in spirit, to follow his vocation, have not their equal on the stage, and far from being too horribly distorted and too harsh in effects, they produce throughout a deep, though not too painful, impression, if the silent acting of the person is correct, if Edgar’s asides are uttered in suitable tones, and if the Fool’s last words are properly prepared—words with which the poet indisputably intended to designate the faithful dependent’s breaking heart.’

Thus, in the scene before us (sc. 6, Act iii.), the Fool enters, ‘labouring to outjest the king’s heart-strook injuries’ with the pointed riddle—

F. Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman ?

L. A king, a king !

F. No, he’s a yeoman that has a gentleman for his son ; for he’s a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

There seems in this answer a covert allusion to Shakspeare’s own circumstances—at least, we are strongly reminded by it of John Shakspeare’s applications for quartering arms and apparently ruining himself in order to write ‘armiger’ after his name though

yeoman born, and living to see his son's prosperous fortune, and, in fact, living in the comfort of his affectionate support—a son who could indeed write himself most truly 'gentleman.' However this may have been in Shakspeare's mind, Lear at once catches this metaphorical allusion to his own act of making his daughters his mothers, as the Fool puts it in another scene, and follows up the idea of vengeance on them :

To have a thousand with red burning spits come hissing in upon them ;
and in his madness pitifully fulfils his threat to Goneril—

That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever.

Once more he is king, on an imaginary throne of justice, and with dignified courtesy invites his 'learnèd justice' (poor Tom) and his 'sapien sir' (the Fool) to bench by his side ; and poor Caius, too, he elects on the commission to arraign these 'she foxes.' Then the Fool tries to break through these mad delusions, which are driving his master to spasmodic outbursts of vengeful fury and of such painful tenderness, as the following :—

L. The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me;

and

Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts ?

Lear is one who wears his heart upon his sleeve ; he loves or hates equally passionately, and expects to meet with the same from all around him. But now, as the Fool finds, it is too late to bring him back to reason. 'All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience,' and no capping of the mad verses of—

Tom. Come o'er the bourne, Bessy, to me.

Fool. Her boat hath a leak,
And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee ;

(which seems, too, an indirect allusion to Cordelia, in France)—no riddles—no endeavour to open Lear's eyes to the plain fact of his imaginary Goneril being only 'a joint stool,' will wring even one forced 'Ha, ha !' from the poor demented King, who raves on till he sinks at last exhausted with his own passion, and the effect of the visionary forms he has conjured up ; and as the mental excitement subsides, the pangs of hunger assert themselves, and for lack of food that sturdy frame yields to a deep rest in the pitiful, confused sentences, which alone could realise for us

the touching picture which closes the three storm-scenes—Lear assisted to his rest by Caius and the Fool :

L. Make no noise, make no noise. Draw the curtains, so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' the morning, so, so, so.

F. And I'll go to bed at noon.

He, too, at last falling in with this mad unsettlement of all time and place—this upsetting of all natural courses. ‘This cold night,’ as he said previously, ‘will turn us all to fools and madmen,’ and with this last equally unmeaning utterance, he, too, sinks exhausted beside the King ; the bond of sympathy is closer knit by their mutual sufferings. But, alas ! the Fool is not allowed to gain that rest to ‘balm his broken senses,’ but at Glo’ster’s alarm he is aroused by the ever-wakeful Caius (Kent), with the summons—

Come, help to bear thy master ;
Thou must not stay behind ;

and thus these true-hearted rivals in affection share the burden of the still sleeping King ; and this is the last appearance—a touching and appropriate exit—of Lear’s Fool.

Yet we could wish that Shakspeare had once more raised the curtain and showed us the end of this inimitable character. It is a want in the play to hear no more of him ; he seems to have been almost forgotten and literally left out in the cold. In the next mad scene we find Lear wandering quite alone, and he makes no direct complaint of their absence—he misses them not, but remembers only those who ‘flattered him like a dog,’ who ‘were not men of their word.’ Yet he momentarily looks for Kent and the Fool’s assistance ; when surprised by Cordelia’s messengers he cries—

No seconds ; all myself !

Yet still, when he wakes up to partial recovery of reason, oblivion seems to envelop the memory of his lost Fool ; but at the very last there is one sublimely pathetic allusion to him, which many have endeavoured to wrest from its obvious meaning, and spoil that ‘one touch of nature,’ by applying its purport to Cordelia :

And my poor Fool is hanged ! No, no, no life !

Lear has entered with Cordelia dead in his arms. Kent has pressed his recognition of himself on the ‘dull sight’ of the dying old man, who fails, however, to identify him with his other missing

attendant, his poor Caius, whose memory is still vivid in his mind :

L. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that ;
He'll strike, and quickly too—he's dead and rotten.

And then the thread is broken again—‘he knows not what he says’—but the mention of Caius leads back his wandering thoughts, ‘with somewhat of a sad perplexity,’ to that other true friend who is also dead and rotten—‘all’s cheerless, dark, and dreary.’ He looks around for the familiar forms ; he lists in vain for the jesting voice—the merry song that hid a breaking heart ; and then he looks down on the dead Cordelia, and there is ‘*No, no, no* life.’ The three ‘no’s’ seem to point to the three who had been ever true to him—Kent, Fool, and Cordelia. This last heart-rending speech is ‘the lightening before death’—that strange, awful last moment when, we are told, all our past life rises before us in rapid review—the voices long silent—the faces almost forgot—the grasp of loving hands ; and once more, in the innocence of childhood, ‘we play with flowers, smile on our finger-ends, and babble o’ green fields,’ like poor Falstaff. So with the dying Lear, left utterly alone. All have gone, one by one, the Fool first ; and though the absorbing joy of the reconciliation with Cordelia, and then her merciless murder, have for a time obliterated the Fool from Lear’s memory, that form seems to rise again before his tear-closing sight, and he cries, ‘And my poor Fool is hanged !’ Surely this is the most natural and pathetic reading of the passage.

We can only conjecture the poor Fool’s fate : in all probability, in that hurried flight his fragile physique and over-wearied and chilled limbs forced him to lag behind, when, overtaken by some of Cornwall’s cruel myrmidons, he met with short shrift, and the death that he himself had prophesied to him who should cling to a wheel that runs down hill. His reward was that of being the earliest of those loving storm-tossed souls to gain that rest denied them here, and find his peace ‘in another and a better world.’ Who can say the tragedy does not end happily? Not as Tate would have twisted it into a conventional fairy tale, with the usual ‘tag’ of ‘married and lived happy ever afterwards’—not as the regulation fifth act of a melodrama—virtue in triumphant priggishness and vice consigned to the police court. No ! Lear has a unique grandeur of its own. When Albany offers earthly reward to Kent, that heroic soul contemns all—he puts

his regained honour and position by at once—his sole desire is to follow his master still :

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go ;
My master calls, and I must not say no.

When the worn-out Lear has gone to rejoin Cordelia and his poor Fool, death has lost all terror ; it is the reward of devotion—‘ the balm of hurt minds ’—the rest of the weary sufferer. ‘ Vex not his ghost,’ cries Kent—

Oh, let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

We rise from the contemplation of this wonderful, painful drama with a sigh of relief, a thankful uplifting from our narrow everyday life from earth to heaven. The tragedy of ‘ Lear ’ can scarcely be said to end ; it leaves us on the verge of that Eternity where death shall make ‘ these odds all even.’

MY FIRST DEER-STALK.

A BRILLIANT September day. Glorious sunshine, a keen biting breeze, so refreshing that it makes a new man of one, and an atmosphere limpid as that of Greece, but lighter, colder, healthier. Overhead no Grecian sky, but the clear pale blue of fairest Scottish weather, fretted every here and there with delicate streaks of white, with some few treacherous cloudbanks looming on either horizon. Around, behind, beneath, what a panorama ! Tell me, ye southerners, if there be any sight like unto this ? On both sides, a far undulating heathery plateau, stretching back behind us to the rocky base of encircling hills, which tower above the intersecting glens, and stand clear in massive strength against the sky. Beneath, a vision of loch and valley gloriously mingled, relieved in turn by shelving green hillsides, on whose slopes the same heathery plateau stretches, the same lochs, the same wilderness of limestone rocks, right to the base of yon further range of far blue hills, which fill the eye on every side but one, and there—the sea. Unutterable blue, mist-shrouded, wind-rippled, fading through mist into darkness, with, far away, faint and dreamlike, the dim peak-broken outline of fairy islands. Eyes filled with loveliest scenery, every sense alert and employed with delicious fulfilment, heart throbbing in unison with nature, surely this is Paradise on earth. Nay, it is only a Scottish deer-forest, hemmed in and fenced off from the rude outer world.

Hither, in the early morning, have we leisurely arrived on the back of sure-footed Highland ponies, knowing every step of the way, with train of stalkers and gillies bearing rifles, lunch-bags, and the like. We have felt the chill morning mist pass by degrees into brilliant sunshine, tempered here upon the heights into freshening breeze. No pilgrimage more delicious than that early morning ride. Every care and care forgotten, every prospect charming, the heather yielding its most exquisite perfume, the air its most fragrant ozone, the whole body reanimated and vigorous, rejoicing in its youth and the zest of mere animal vigour.

There are times when every intellectual principle and guide are abandoned in the luxury of untrammelled natural living. Such is now our state. Though lawyers, economists, philanthropists,

cry out on us and our intentions, here we are, and here will remain. 'Tis the most glorious recreation and sport yet invented of man, on which once entered no argument can aught avail. As for the killing and the victims and so forth, these are necessary evils, and to us, in the present temper, very much exaggerated.

Yet killing, after all, is what we have come for. And of this, even as we lie, we are reminded. To us this respite from climbing is a mere sense-luxury. But to others—to yon canny, grey-haired stalker, with wondrous brown clothes and brick-coloured stockings, or to his fellow with keen grey eyes and dear rugged head, so like one of the apostles in Raphael's cartoon of the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes,' there is work to be done whilst we luxuriate. The one is lying on his back with long dull-coloured telescope, cunningly inserted between upholding knees, for all the world like a Wimbledon marksman; the other, cannier still, with stick inserted in the ground, and his glass resting in the crook, both sweeping their glance from cranny to cranny of the hillside behind us. Long and careful is the scrutiny. At length, just when the strain seems no longer endurable, there is a low muttering of Gaelic gutturals, and we are informed 'there she'll be—a lot of hinds and twa staags.' Vain is it for the novice to endeavour to spy out the latent herd. That is a matter of long-acquired intuition. First and foremost, the glass never will remain steady, but wriggles about distractingly. Even when steadied he finds a true *focus* impossible, or sweeps too broadly over the hillside, generally ending in a triumphant discovery of two or three rocks, which, he strongly asseverates, are the prey he seeks. Happy is he who, *post tot tantosque labores*, or by the premature luck which is the portion of some men, catches a glimpse of the few little brown specks on the hillside, and realises that he is 'on' them at last. That is a sight to make the blood tingle—at a distance of a mile or more to note one's booty, and to know that therewith a campaign has begun between man and one of nature's noblest animals. 'Ay, twa staags, the one an eicht-pointer—terrible bonnie, the other only a knobber.' Such is the verdict of the master stalker, who now summons us to be ready for the fray. Fortunately the wind is favourable—just perfect, blowing right off the deer into our faces. There is no chance of our scent reaching them, anyhow. But the strategical problem is this—given those deer to windward at a distance of a mile or so, but with next to no cover between you and them, how to get within shot. You are

just beginning to recognise the points for cogitation, when the chief campaigners have made up their minds. In a trice, everything is ready for the start. The ponies are sent off down the hill and out of sight, all the gillies with them save one, who is to follow us at a safe distance and well within cover, with the inevitable sandwiches and whiskey. The novice is accompanied on this his first march out by the two stalkers. No doubt this is a special mark of favour, one man being enough in all conscience for any sportsman. But this is a special case, for the laird has given strict orders that the novice is to have as good a chance as possible of accomplishing the grand feat. So the two go to coach him, to prevent mistakes, and to keep things straight. All at once, the novice, who has just begun to understand the problem as to want of cover, is agreeably startled by a rapid movement of his guides, who suddenly snatch up their *impedimenta*, and with body-bent motion disappear under the shelter of a little gully on the right hand. The novice, following, is led step by step into a burn with deep shelving sides, and the three promenade leisurely along its banks in complete shelter. Naturally, the novice is eager to understand things, and having gathered why they have sought the burn, he tremulously asks whether they are not getting too far to the side so as to scatter the scent somewhat. Reassured, he plies other questions. He is answered civilly, but with a trifle of impatience. To his companions this is no frivolous pastime ; there is no time for the childish prattlings of curiosity. It is a serious business that we are upon—a sixteen-stone stag before us—well worth a shot, capable even of raising the year's average. Yet he learns enough to know some of the strange theories of these people. To these wild children of nature this is no mimic campaign. It is a veritable contest between man and beast, in which the 'cuteness' is not all upon the man's side. They will tell you, and they evidently believe it, that the deer know perfectly well what your object is in pursuing them. How ? Oh, they have been chased before, and know what a bullet is. And besides, can they not compare notes with their fellows ? You think not ? Ah, wait until you know them better. Then again, the deer has his two weapons—the eye and the nose. That is all he has to fight with. We are now defeating the nose, which is the more wonderful and useful of the two ; but the eye must also be evaded shortly. Such is their running comment.

We are now at a point where the burn's sides cease to shelf,

and the burn itself becomes a mere Prattling stream, which runs level with the grass. We pause on the flat where the cover just ceases, and an interval of spying ensues. Even to the novice the brown specks on the hillside are now visible. But, with miraculous sagacity, the stalkers have discovered that the larger stag has a ninth point, small and hidden, therefore not espied before. 'Ah, terrible bonnie,' repeats the younger. 'I wuss I had my knife in him whatever,' says the elder laconically. Then follows an awesome creep over the hillside to get under the hill and out of sight. Flat on the stomach we crawl across a rocky soil, then for a brief space head foremost down along the hillside, with dread discomfort and apoplexy imminent. But when it is over, and the sky-line safely crossed, our difficulties, overcome for the meantime, are by no means at an end. A swift, half-running movement, which rather jars one, brings us at length under our final cover, a long stretching heap of rocks, over which we are to mount, and progress safely on the flat until we come to two successive natural tiers, by which we shall at length approximate to our victims. O the agony of that climb upon those rocks! How many slips and barkings of the shins, how many scratchings of the hands, how many infernal falls of one rock against another, giving rise to agonised alarm that the enemy will overhear us! These make up no primrose path. But at length it is surmounted, at length we are again on flat ground, and moving cautiously on and on, with infinite care that no slightest sound shall escape us. An exclamation hastily dropped by the novice brings out a loud 'Wheesht!' from the men. On and up alternately we go, until at length we reach the final bank which separates us from the deer. Cautiously and slowly, the stalker raises himself on his hands from behind the farthest edge of the bank, and, with head kept absolutely steady when once it is over the line, looks carefully around. As cautiously and slowly he descends again, to announce that it is all right, and that the whole lot are lying feeding within one hundred and twenty yards. Then the second stalker rises similarly for a view, and lastly the novice. At first his eyes, dazzled by the unfamiliar sight, distinguish nothing. Then quickly some half-dozen recumbent brown bodies dawn on his view, and an excited gesture draws forth an angry remonstrance from the keeper. At first, too, they all seem like stags to his view, so like are the hinds' ears to small upstanding horns like those of the 'knobber.' But after a moment his eyes

light upon *the stag*, whose grand head moves slowly and majestically from side to side as he steadily browses. Then, full of excitement, he retires below. Of course he is all eager to begin the fray and get into position at once. But that cannot be thought of. The stalker's word in such a situation is law. 'It wass a good staag, and she'll not be going to loss it by letting her fire at her lying.' The doom is that the novice must wait until the deer choose to rise. How long will that be? 'Maybe an hour, maybe more,' is the cold comfort of his answer. What in the world is to be done till then? All this in loud whispers. The young stalker has already answered that question for himself. This is the best opportunity yet afforded for the standing Highland ceremony of a 'taste.' Afterwards the novice will learn that nothing great in deer-stalking is ever done, or even contemplated, without a 'taste.' So the bottles are produced and partaken of, the novice refusing. What need has he of whiskey, with such a fever in the blood? 'Ah, it wass a good thing whiskey; it will make you cold in summer and warm in winter.' Yet a worse thing follows: two pipes are produced, two plugs of ropelike tobacco cut up and inserted. The novice is in a tremor. 'Surely you are not going to smoke?' he says. 'Of course; why not?' is the reply: 'they'll smell you as soon as your smoke.' So perforce the novice gives in—nay, joins them in the fragrant weed; and thus they lie, every now and then taking a peep at the deer, the novice oftenest. They lie immovable and careless. Nay, two of the hinds even play on the grass and butt each other.

See how unconscious of their doom
The little victims play!

And now, whilst this weary waiting is begun, and the novice lies smarting with an impatience which even tobacco cannot allay, recking no longer of valley and sea and sky, a change is apparent. Gradually and unperceived by our trio, the sky above has darkened, and the blue is hidden in part. Not long have they lain, when suddenly and without warning the white, steamlike mist of the morning overshadows them again, and this time wets them thoroughly in the few minutes it takes to pass. Nothing now is visible around or behind. One may be careless of arousing the deer. Now is the temper of the novice tried. Wet to the skin, with only a half-drowned pipe to comfort him, he falls back upon the flask so lately disdained. He is tumultuously angry

that he did not shoot before this 'infernal shower.' At which the stalker only smiles sardonically, thereby enhancing his rage. To lie and do nothing is undignified, but nothing can be done which shall be less so. By-and-by the shower and mist clear off, with a parting touch of sleet, and the blue reappears. An eager look is satisfied by the spectacle of the deer still lying above, mightily unconcerned but comfortably settled, with never a thought of rising. There is nothing for it but to wait. But, oh ! the misery of that long, wet, comfortless watch, the frequent draughts of whiskey, as the novice discovers that fingers and feet alike are numb, the terrible suspicion that if the deer should now rise, though never so nicely, they will rise for him in vain ! For one long hour and a half they have been recumbent. Impatience has given way to weariness, hope to despair. But nothing all this time has ruffled the stalkers' philosophic equanimity. There they lie, chatting a little in low tones, quite unconcerned as it seems. There is nothing like a placid temperament for a sportsman.

At length, when the novice begins to think it hopeless to attempt to rouse his companions at all, one of them after a scrutiny announces that one of the hinds is up. The rest will follow shortly. So the rifle is got ready and laid up on the top of the bank. The novice, his excitement now returning, is adjured to aim quietly and steadily, to put the bead of the sight upon the deer's heart when it rises, and to pull the trigger slowly and gently, just as if he were squeezing a lemon. He advances with palpitating heart to rest upon the bankside, and so secure a comfortable position, before the crucial moment comes for taking aim. And now, at the very instant when he is so adjusting himself, a very unexpected thing happens. How it takes place, no one ever knows. Whether the novice displayed too much of his head and it caught the hind's eye, or whether he made some slight noise which caught her ear, or whether the movement of the rifle through the air attracted her, none can tell ; but, all at once, she looks straight at him with cocked-up ears. He lies as still as may be, not daring to move a muscle. Then another hind rises and also looks. Quick as thought the whole herd turn their eyes upon the very spot where we are hidden. Then follows a sharp angry bark from the first hind, who is clearly dissatisfied with what her senses report. One by one, the whole herd rise and stand erect, the great stag last of all, his graceful head moving to and fro with excitement. He turns full broadside on, and the whole

lot stand on the *qui vive*, ready at once to run. Now is the novice's chance. Ah! he is ready and eager to take it, but the Fates are against him. For safety's sake the rifle has been left locked on half-cock. It has to be opened and cocked, and is so opened frantically. There is too much movement and clicking. With the enemy suspicion has become certainty, and in a moment they are off! Frenzied now is the novice, frantically he covers them in response to the stalker's call of 'Quick!' But just when he is on the point of pulling he is called on to stop; and luckily he does stop, just in time. For there, about thirty yards farther on, making one hundred and fifty yards in all, the curious creatures stop and gaze back again at the seat of their disturbance, amongst them the stag, which slowly turns round and sniffs the air, presenting a grand broadside. Now or never is the chance. And the novice has seized it: at once he has his wavering rifle on the brown body, as carefully as may be, he finds the bead on the right spot, aims, and pulls. When his senses have recovered from the shock and smoke, he perceives that the stag has moved forward slightly, and stands groggily, as if stunned by the report. Hope springs up at once. 'He is hit!—No—Yes—he is only walking on—', but the words are left unfinished. Probably they have stood for a second, and then all of them, stag included, dash off at a high pace, unscathed and contemptuous. Now is the revulsion of horror. Language, unprofitable but terrible, follows from the novice. Despair, resentment, all bad human passions surge in his mind. Too well he realises now that he has given that fatal upward jerk in firing which is the chief symptom of 'stag fever,' and ruins many a good stalk. But we forbear. There are some occasions on which a man is best left alone with his sorrow.

There follows, of course, that usual panacea for all ills, as it is the consummation of all joys—a 'taste.' Then tongues are loosened, and sympathy flows forth. It was not a real chance—quite impossible to kill after so long and numb a waiting, and with so short an aim. Besides, the day is still young, and another chance may well be had before nightfall. And so the novice gradually relents from his despair, and conceals the canker at his heart with talk about the future. The interval of 'tasting' extends itself into lunch, a meal of which the novice partakes heartily, in spite of his chagrin. A pipe follows, and it is about half past one o'clock before they start, this time with full determination to be successful. The day is now bright again,

and the practised eye sees no longer any chance of disturbing weather. Their way varies from the previous journey. Now they are at the base of the hills, and have to pass the line in order to reach the farther part of the forest, where is one special, never-failing glen, the last resort in case of failure on the nearer side of the forest. Curious, indeed, and awe-inspiring is the road. It is a corrie winding between the hills, and almost grassless. Most of the way winds about amongst heaps of gigantic limestone rocks, which literally cover the ground. Nay, the very hills seem covered with, and almost composed of, them. It is a wild desolation, suggestive of strange thoughts. Here these stones have lain in their heaps, undisturbed and mostly unvisited, exactly as they fell ages ago, when the great cataclysm took place of which this land was the result. One tries vainly to imagine how it all happened—how these lowering hills rocked about, and some were raised and others fell, and the sea was dashing about them, and the rocks were hurled in showers of fire, until at length the sea parted from off the dry land, and it rose solid and sound. And thus it has remained ever since that final revolution, unaltered, mostly unseen by man, and so shall endure until the end comes. Many a mad theorist would be tamed to reason, and purified of arguments as to cultivation of these deer-forests, if he could but be brought to see them as they are, the lower pasture-lands merging into these wastes. Here is no home, save for straying sheep, or for the passing of nimble deer. It has no settled inhabitants, save the soaring eagle and the rock-coloured ptarmigan. As we pass through it we realise that probably it can be put to no better use than it now is.

But pass it we do, and emerge upon the country beyond the high hills, which is fair and green and far-stretching, with plains and valleys and hills again repeated. Tiresome is this journey, for eight good miles have been walked from our last resting-place, and the afternoon is well advanced ere we reach the limit of the ground. Hitherto we have encountered nothing, but luck does not desert us. At the farthest end of the ground we are perched on a point from which the final plateau shelves down on two sides of its square into a deep valley. Right and left from us in the valley run the silvery streams that form our 'march.' Beyond are the neighbouring forests, and in that upon the right we are privileged to see a strange sight. It is now the very end of September, and the neighbouring sportsmen, keen to increase

their bag, have fixed upon to-day for a great drive. We are not long in discovering men posted at different sides of the plateau before us. Ere long, a low, shrill whistle sounds, and soon we see two large herds of deer appear rapidly upon the hillside, and pace wildly about. Some instinct drives them together, and as they run along by our right side they gradually coalesce. Up and up the hill they speed, with frequent stoppage, but ever aroused again and driven on. And then, just when our stalker has espied the ambush, as the herd defiles along, three hundred in number, like a mimic army, we see white flashes of smoke, and hear the sharp ping of rifles. At right angles the herd turns, and now we are breathless with excitement, and care not to note the damage done across the way; for are they not heading straight for our ground? and will there not be a splendid chance at last? True, they come straight enough, at breakneck speed. Down the hill in confused disorder, then straggling at the burn which forms the march, each one crossing separately and gingerly. In a trice they are on our ground, that splendid herd, containing I know not how many stags, gladdening the keeper's heart. They approach the jutting corner of the hill from whose summit we watch them below, and there they settle, the run shading off into a gentle walk, and that into complete rest. Quick as may be, we commence the steep descent of the other side of the hill, so as to catch them at the corner. Ours is a breakneck speed, but on we go. Yet, once arrived at the foot of the hill, and all exhausted, what do we find on carefully surveying the corner? Not a hoof or horn, where lately the sward was brown with deer. Not a sound is uttered, but away in the far distance we descried a galloping herd. Something has startled them, and again we are undone.

It is with true fortitude that we retrace our steps up the hill-side again, and prepare to make for home. Such ill-fortune is enough to make a saint swear. It is a really unlucky day; and now the afternoon is just beginning to fade into dusk. We shall have to retrace our steps home, tired and disappointed, over the rough way, and will return empty-handed and late for dinner. Involuntarily there comes into our novice's mind, as he plods along, the discouraging story of the man who had walked a whole day, got near a very good stag, and missed an easy shot; and how the stalker said never a word of condolence or reproach, but sighed and gently remarked—‘A-weel! ye're eighteen miles frae yer denner.’ His own fate is parallel. He curses the whole

thing, about which he has been so romantic. Never will he make a fool of himself again. What do the hills and skies matter to him ? Let him shoot at cows for targets. He may be keen on sport, but nature will never make of him a sportsman. Not that it is his fault—no, only his ill-luck ; it is all these blundering devils of—

Hush ! What is this ? As if at one bound the two stalkers are prone on the ground, and the gillie, first of all, raises a warning hand as he crouches down. Down, too, flops the novice. Can it really be yet another chance ? Then the luck is not so bad. Yes indeed, he hears, a herd, that has somehow escaped them as they went forward, or come up from behind after them, is there, in the hollow ahead. Steadily they crawl onward in the gathering dusk, eager to seize the chance thus offered, and in one head, at least, the blood is surging. Dusk though it be, even though light be failing, victory shall now be his. Steadily he seizes the ready rifle, like iron he holds it, for after all it may only be a snapshot he will get. Yes ! there at last they are, just discernible in the dulling grey air, on the far side of the small hollow before them. Steady as a rock, with nerves on the stretch, and every sense agog, he stretches himself at full length, poises his rifle, seeks for it a rest, finds it, levels, and aims carefully at 'the body' clearest seen, with antlers just discernible. Not wavering now, no fatal jerk. Soft as velvet, hard as iron is the pull ; clear the hit. Startled by the report, there is a lightning-like run of many ; but one—*the one*—staggers gently to the side, and falls prone. Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious. There he lies, when we reach him, a fine eight-pointer, fat and flourishing. Now, indeed, is the time for 'tasting,' for guttural congratulation, for smearing a fair young face with blood, for all the brutality of 'grollaching.' As the deer's last toilette is completed, the victor sits rejoicing in his triumph. No longer he thinks of the discomfort and disappointment he has endured, nor of that terrible rock-bound trudge, twelve miles of which lie before him on his homeward way. Rather is it of the cosy room and the abundant dinner, of the glories of narration, the drinkings of whiskey, the wholesale distribution of largesses. Like Homer's heroes, he will fill himself out with fat meat and red wine, and then will stretch himself at length in well-earned and dreamless slumbers, happy to know that when the morning comes he will arise with a reputation that can never leave him. He has shot his stag.

FIFINE'S FUNERAL.

Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring !

IT was Christmas Eve. Bob Sheldon had brought with him his wife and his child, a little girl of four years of age, all rose and blond. The foreign *cénacle* was in full force, and the excellent Madame Stiefel and her husband, invited to our table, were joining in our talk and toasts. Madame Stiefel liked her foreigner customers—‘*mes étrangers*’ as she called us; and that night, too, we were having a special festivity in honour of Mrs. Sheldon and little Fifine who only came rarely to the restaurant. For that matter, the day itself was a sufficient excuse for something extra. Even in Central Africa an Englishman can scarcely allow Christmas Eve to pass unnoticed. And so we had clubbed together to have a dinner worthy of the occasion ; Madame Stiefel had done justice to her reputation ; we had dined magnificently for Bohemians as we all were, and now we were mixing our grog, smoking our pipes, and feeling peculiarly happy.

Little Fifine seemed to feel quite at home in this mixed company : she had never seen any other. Her father, amongst other youthful adventures, had been an actor and stage manager of a provincial theatre in England ; he had even written several dramas, and when I knew him in 185-, he obtained a precarious living as an essayist and polygraph, if that excessively scholastic name may be applied to the versatile contributors to our modern periodical literature. Prodigal beyond all hope of remedy, Bob Sheldon never had a penny in his pocket ; a fact which did not for one moment prevent him from falling in love with an actress who was no richer than himself. The actress having accepted Bob's suit, he borrowed five pounds of a friend and married his ladylove. Neither he nor she having any money, and Bob's earnings being uncertain, the young couple ran into debt, and, in order to escape accepting the hospitality of the King's Bench prison, Bob and his wife had thought fit to cross the Channel and come to Paris.

Accustomed to this life of chance and adventure, little Fifine felt quite at home in the Restaurant Stiefel. Why should she not ?

She had never known any home. And so the little girl was quite happy as she danced and laughed and chattered on her father's knees :

‘Papa ! papa ! Boum ! boum !’

Sheldon was proud of the heiress of his debts. He looked at her and kissed her tenderly, and the little one repeated :

‘Papa ! Boum ! boum !’

And she thumped on his shoulder with her little hands clenched.

‘Ah ! it's to be Boum ! boum ! is it ? You want to hear about Boum ! boum ! Very good ! Gentlemen, Fifine demands Boum ! boum !’

And amidst the ready laughter of the Bohemians, who had been rendered extraordinarily indulgent by a good dinner, Sheldon proceeded to recite a mock showman's harangue to please the little one :

‘Tara, ta ta ta, dzing, dzing, boum, boum ! Walk up ! Walk up ! Ladies and gentlemen, princes and princesses, nobles and commoners. The spectacle that we have the honour of presenting to you is unique in this world and unknown in any other, as far as we know. Walk up ! Walk up and take your places to see the wonderful phenomenon, the great and inimitable Perilipiton, known in British India under the name of the Rhamadan-Fla, and in Patagonia as the squatting salamander. Only two of these formidable quadrupeds have ever been brought into Europe. One was bought by the Emperor of the French, and the other by this menagerie. The Emperor's Perilipiton died of a squirrous cancer in the tail. The Perilipiton of this menagerie is in perfect health and condition, and will now perform before the public his graceful and unparalleled tricks. Ladies and gentlemen ! the front seats be twopence and the back ditto a penny ! Walk up ! The Perilipiton, I hear, is getting impatient to show himself to the company, with his body like the keel of a boat and his foot like a warming-pan ! Walk up ! Boum, boum ! Dzing, balaboum !’ &c.

The joyous cries of Fifine increased as the harangue proceeded, and ‘the foot like a warming-pan’ brought her gaiety to a climax. When Bob had done imitating the drum and the roarings of the Perilipiton, we mixed fresh grogs and drank to Fifine's health, to Madame Stiefel's health, and to everybody's health. George Grant, in his quality of poet of the *cénacle*, recited some verses ; while Philip Lake, pupil of Conture, and native of Ithaca, N.Y., drew an

anticipatory caricature of Fifine's presentation at the Court of the Tuileries as the tamer of the Perilipton. Chaseville, the other member of the *cénacle*, was overwhelmed with emotion. He was shedding tears! Why? Chaseville was a pessimist. Theoretically he believed the birth of a child to be a matter for sadness. The natural gaiety of youth he regarded as a cruel mockery, and joyousness itself an abdication of the reasoning powers. Death he looked upon as a deliverance, if it were not the much-to-be-desired entrance upon the state of Nirvana. Chaseville had elaborated, with the assistance of Hartmann, Schopenhauer, Leopardi, and the Greek anthology, a philosophic system of vague and cloudy profundity, the only conclusion of which was that there was no remedy for the evils of this life but annihilation. He figured to himself the earth and its inhabitants as a barrel floating on the surface of the unfathomable waters. The greatest benefit that a superior power could confer upon mankind would be, according to Chaseville, to pull out the bung and let the barrel sink. 'Pull out the bung' was Chaseville's panacea. With all his intermittent philosophy, Chaseville was nevertheless a gay and seemingly happy fellow five days out of seven; he even had a weakness. After dinner he delighted to drink raw spirits until he arrived at a certain point of intoxication, what he called the tender note in the gamut of ebriety. At this moment he had reached this point: he was bewailing in silence the woes of humanity.

At last the moment came to separate. Chaseville, as usual on grand occasions, insisted upon proposing and drinking a toast to Buddha and another to the divine Sophocles, who in the chorus of the 'Edipus Coloneus' had said those profound words, the epigraph of Chaseville's forthcoming 'Primer of Pessimism,' *μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἄπαντα νικᾶ λόγον*. Not wishing to be disagreeable to Chaseville, we drank this toast, though under reserves; and so, with mutual good wishes, the meeting of the *cénacle* broke up.

But what was this *cénacle*? It was simply a group of friends and compatriots, or rather of Anglo-Saxon cosmopolitans. Chaseville was the occasional correspondent of a New York journal; George Grant represented an English journal; Philip Lake, of Ithaca, N.Y., was studying at the same time painting and 'la vie de Bohème.' These three, together with Bob Sheldon, were the pillars of the *cénacle*, of which several other English and Americans and a few Frenchmen were honorary members, and were welcomed

boisterously whenever they chose to come to the Restaurant Stiefel, the place where the *cénacle* held its nightly meetings.

The Crêmerie Restaurant, kept by Polydore Stiefel, was not remarkable for the excessive luxury of its ornamentation. The walls were bare and sombre ; they were painted, it is true, but in what colour it was no longer possible even to guess. The floor was sprinkled with yellow sand ; the chairs and tables were of the most ordinary and cheap kind. To the left as one entered was the *caisse* or desk on which stood a vase of cut flowers, a plated urn, or save-all, for the waiter's *pourboires*, and the book in which Madame Stiefel wrote her accounts. On each side of the long room were tables covered with coarse but snowy-white cloths. At the end of the room to the right was the kitchen, and to the left the *salon*. Madame Stiefel presided in the kitchen and at the desk, and nevertheless found time to have a little chat with each of her guests. She was a treasure, this Madame Stiefel, a stout, rosy-faced woman of fifty, with regular features, fine black eyes, and black hair.

Her husband, Polydore Stiefel, was of a strange type—tall, well made, his white hair close cropped, a very thin and phenomenally long neck, the back of which was flat and hairless, just as if it had been shaved and then polished with emery paper. This flat waste was, so to speak, the smooth and polished reverse of that wrinkled, drawn, and melancholy medal, his face. Polydore Stiefel had had, indeed, his days of glory, even of literary glory. He had been a professor at one time, and had given German lessons in several noble families of the Faubourg Saint Germain ; but that was years ago, in the good time of which Polydore Stiefel loved to talk while drinking *petits verres* with his customers. But unfortunately Stiefel, like Ariadne when deserted by Theseus, had abandoned himself to Bacchus ; and now, it was to be feared, there was an unequal contest between the modest profits of the restaurant and the permanent and Saharian aridity of Polydore's throat.

The poor man, too, was nearly blind. It appears that in his days of prosperity he had studied and pored over books, and worked and worked until his eyes failed him and his brain too. For a year he was smitten down with a nervous trouble and obliged to give up his pupils and his hack literary work. It was then that, in order to gain their daily bread, Madame Stiefel had opened the little restaurant in the Rue de la Rochefoucauld, with the sign :—

POLYDORE STIEFEL,
CRÊMERIE RESTAURANT,

and painted on the two windows the supplementary announcements, 'Chocolat et Café au lait,' 'Bouillon et Bœuf,' 'On porte en ville,' and the charmingly honest notice, 'English spoken *a little*.'

But Polydore Stiefel, far from recovering, grew blinder and blinder, and more and more demoralised. He now did nothing but smoke his pipe, talk liberalism when he felt sure of his hearers, and drink *petits verres*. Three times a week he used to go down to the boulevards, but, being nearly blind, he needed a guide. For this service a boy named Zadok had been engaged. Zadok's body was so slender that it almost escaped notice; his head on the contrary was colossal, and adorned with a nose of the noblest form. This nose was unmistakable proof that Zadok descended from a family as old as the world. He took his wages out in kind, and in such a manner as made one suspect that on the days when he was not on duty as Polydore's guide he economised his appetite.

Of the other *habitués* of the Restaurant Stiefel—Poles, Greeks, Russians, painters, poets, and Bohemians of all kinds—nothing need be said specially, as they do not have any share in this narrative.

One day, about a fortnight after our Christmas Eve dinner, I arrived at the restaurant after an absence of eight or ten days.

'Have you heard the news?' asked Madame Stiefel.

'What news?'

'Madame Sheldon has lost her daughter.'

Imagining how great must be grief of the father, who was a mere bundle of nerves, I hurried up to the hotel at Montmartre, in the Rue Lepic, where Sheldon and his wife were lodging.

I found him in despair, sobbing and weeping bitterly.

I did my best to console him for his irreparable loss, and at last suggested that, as we were foreigners here in Paris, we ought to make haste to accomplish the usual formalities.

'Formalities! What formalities?' he asked.

'The formalities at the Mairie. The declarations . . .'

'The devil take the Mairie and the declarations! The Mairie won't give me back my daughter.'

And he poured out a glass of brandy, weeping more bitterly than ever. It was of no use to hesitate, so I took down his hat and coat from the peg, threw the coat over his shoulders, telling him that I would do the talking and arrange matters, but that his

presence was absolutely necessary. Thereupon we went to the Mairie and made the necessary declarations, and thence across the street to the office of the Pompes Funèbres. There I explained to the clerk that we wanted to bury a child of four years of age, and that we wanted to manage the affair as economically as possible. Poor Bob, of course, had not a sou.

‘*Bien, monsieur*,’ replied the clerk, as he took note of the order. Then, after a pause—

‘*Faudra-t-il un prêtre*?’

I did not know what to answer. I turned to consult Bob, but he was in a state of stupor, and his eyes were still full of tears. He could not answer. The situation was evidently understood by the clerk, who said in a half compassionate, half contemptuous tone :

‘*Eh bien—Monsieur* is a foreigner . . . English, if I am not mistaken . . . probably a Protestant . . . no priest then, eh?’

And the detail ‘no priest’ was added to the other particulars in the ruled columns of the lugubrious order-book.

Bob Sheldon was indeed a stranger and an Englishman and a Protestant, though not much given to religious practice. He did not need a priest, as the clerk had concluded.

However, while we were at the Mairie, George Grant had, at Mrs. Sheldon’s request, gone to see a Protestant chaplain, who at that time had charge of errant souls in Paris, a robust, hearty man, and withal a Doctor of Divinity. George Grant explained to this reverend Doctor that Sheldon had lost his child, that he wished to have a prayer said over the grave, and that the funeral would take place the next morning at ten o’clock at the Montmartre cemetery. George added that Sheldon was a literary man, and intimated that his pockets were not overloaded with golden guineas. But the reverend gentleman interrupted these details in a sharp and dry tone :

‘I never officiate for less than twenty francs.’

Reckoning on the charitableness of the Doctor’s soul, since every Sunday the Doctor preached the Gospel, and since the Gospel preached charity, George had taken care to change a napoleon, in the hope that the reverend gentleman, learning the pecuniary embarrassment of Sheldon, might content himself with a five-franc piece in order not to have the air of officiating purely out of charity.

But Dr. X. was firm ; and so George Grant, seeing that de-

ecidedly there was no help for it, counted out the burial fee in twenty pieces of one franc—one franc, two francs, three francs, four francs, up to twenty—saying to himself that by so doing each franc would be an arrow fixed in the conscience of the Doctor of Divinity.

The next morning—it was in the middle of the month of January—the undertaker's men, the *croquemorts*, as the French term them, arrived at the hour agreed upon. It was snowing. It had been snowing all night, and these bony, grimy, cynical *croquemorts* looked like sinister crows, so black did they appear in contrast with the dazzling whiteness of the snow.

Madame Stiefel had come the previous night to wash the body of Fifine and to place it in the bier. The poor mother was in a state of mute and helpless despair. The father had lost his head altogether. What could he do? And, not knowing what he was doing, he went and drank half a tumbler of brandy, and then went and sat in a corner of the room sobbing and weeping, while Madame Stiefel, like a good, practical woman, performed the last duties towards the lifeless child.

On the morning of the burial, between eight and nine o'clock, Madame Stiefel had sent her nephew, a fat and rosy-cheeked country boy, who was waiter in the restaurant. His aunt sent her compliments to Mrs. Sheldon and asked if there was anything she could do. No, everything had been done; Madame Stiefel was really too kind. Would Monsieur allow him to see the corpse? the boy asked.

'Yes, yes,' replied Sheldon, scarcely relishing the curiosity of the red-faced peasant boy, although his request had been made with the greatest gravity and politeness.

Sheldon opened the door; the boy entered and immediately fell on his knees before the coffin, and began praying and making innumerable signs of the cross, while the warmth of the chamber melted into little rivulets the clods of snow on his upturned shoe-soles. This manifestation was the boy's way of showing sympathy. He was praying sincerely for the soul of little 'Mam'selle Fifine.'

At ten o'clock everybody had arrived except George Grant and the minister—Philip Lake, Chaseville, Professor Stiefel, accompanied by Zadok and Zadok's nose. But where was the minister? Where was Grant?

Finally the *croquemorts* began to grow impatient. They

could not wait. They had their orders. They had another funeral to go to. Perhaps the minister had gone directly to the cemetery. We must start.

The snow lay thick and crisp on the ground. It was still snowing, and the big flakes lashed your face as the wind whirled them along. The sound of footsteps was deadened; the few vehicles that passed betrayed their presence only by a dull rumbling and groaning of the springs. The roaring of busy Paris was still; the streets were deserted; the great city in its silent stillness seemed like a great corpse under its shroud of snow.

Still, as we neared the cemetery signs of life became once more evident. No sooner had the modest *cortège* entered the avenue leading up to the cemetery than two marble-masons pounced upon us like birds of prey, proposing monuments, 'crosses of black wood very cheap,' 'an article in wrought iron altogether exceptional, quite within the means of Monsieur.' Happily these harpies are no longer allowed to trouble mourners with their lugubrious offers.

At length, after a long promenade through the old cemetery, we passed under the bridge and reached the bare and desert an-nexe where Fifine's grave had been dug. But we found neither Grant nor the minister. What was to be done? The *croquemorts* insisted that they could not wait. After all, they said, what was the good of waiting? So, after having brushed off the snow that had fallen on the bier, we let them lower it into the grave, into the carpet of snow that contrasted with the yellow clayey earth of the side of the trench. Each one threw a handful of cold earth upon the coffin, and then we hurried away, sad, silent, and shivering.

As we were descending the avenue from the cemetery gate to the exterior boulevard we saw coming towards us through the drifting snow a strange little phantom dressed in black, wearing black gloves and a black comforter, which set off conspicuously a flaming red nose. The phantom held its hands up to shelter its eyes from the snow. It was George Grant, who had arrived too late for the ceremony. George was in a state of furious anger. Still, we could not stay to listen to explanations in that blinding snowstorm. Sheldon, too, was anxious to do things decently, although he had not a sou; he had an idea that funeral baked meats were necessary, and so we repaired to a wineshop on the Boulevard de Clichy, where George gave us an explanation of his absence

and of that of the reverend Doctor. It was a long history, which may be briefly summed up. George had taken a cab to fetch the minister; the cab had broken down at the head of the Rue Pigalle, within ten minutes' walk of the cemetery. The Doctor refused to walk. It was impossible to get another carriage. Grant tried at several stables in the neighbourhood, but none of the *loueurs* would trust a horse out for love or money. Grant therefore returned to the scene of the disaster, where he found the Doctor of Divinity sitting in the cab. He told him there was no means of getting another carriage, and proposed that they should go to the cemetery on foot.

'I never go to a funeral on foot,' replied the reverend gentleman, as he got out of the cab and started on his return home, with his twenty francs in his pocket, leaving Grant and the broken-down cab to get on as best they could.

And this was the reason why Fifine was buried without book or candle.

THE RECIPE FOR GENIUS.

LET US start fair by frankly admitting that the genius, like the poet, is born and not made. If you wish to apply the recipe for producing him, it is unfortunately necessary to set out by selecting beforehand his grandfathers and grandmothers, to the third and fourth generation of those that precede him. Nevertheless, there is a recipe for the production of genius, and every actual concrete genius who ever yet adorned or disgraced this oblate spheroid of ours has been produced, I believe, in strict accordance with its unwritten rules and unknown regulations. In other words, geniuses don't crop up irregularly anywhere, 'quite promiscuous like ;' they have their fixed laws and their adequate causes : they are the result and effect of certain fairly demonstrable concatenations of circumstance : they are, in short, a natural product, not a *lusus naturæ*. You get them only under sundry relatively definite and settled conditions ; and though it isn't (unfortunately) quite true that the conditions will always infallibly bring forth the genius, it is quite true that the genius can never be brought forth at all without the conditions. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? No more can you get a poet from a family of stockbrokers who have intermarried with the daughters of an eminent alderman, or make a philosopher out of a country grocer's eldest son whose amiable mother had no soul above the half-pounds of tea and sugar.

In the first place, by way of clearing the decks for action, I am going to start even by getting rid once for all (so far as we are here concerned) of that famous but misleading old distinction between genius and talent. It is really a distinction without a difference. I suppose there is probably no subject under heaven on which so much high-flown stuff and nonsense has been talked and written as upon this well-known and much-debated hair-splitting discrimination. It is just like that other great distinction between fancy and imagination, about which poets and essayists discoursed so fluently at the beginning of the present century, until at last one fine day the world at large woke up suddenly to the unpleasant consciousness that it had been wasting its time over a non-existent difference, and that fancy and imagination were after all absolutely identical. Now, I won't

dogmatically assert that talent and genius are exactly one and the same thing; but I do assert that genius is simply talent raised to a slightly higher power; it differs from it not in kind but merely in degree: it is talent at its best. There is no drawing a hard-and-fast line of demarcation between the two. You might just as well try to classify all mankind into tall men and short men, and then endeavour to prove that a real distinction existed in nature between your two artificial classes. As a matter of fact, men differ in height and in ability by infinitesimal gradations: some men are very short, others rather short, others medium-sized, others tall, and yet others again of portentous stature like Mr. Chang and Jacob Omnim. So, too, some men are idiots, some are next door to a fool, some are stupid, some are worthy people, some are intelligent, some are clever, and some geniuses. But genius is only the culminating point of ordinary cleverness, and if you were to try and draw up a list of all the real geniuses in the last hundred years, no two people could ever be found to agree among themselves as to which should be included and which excluded from the artificial catalogue. I have heard Kingsley and Charles Lamb described as geniuses, and I have heard them both absolutely denied every sort of literary merit. Carlyle thought Darwin a poor creature, and Comte regarded Hegel himself as an empty windbag.

The fact is, most of the grandiose talk about the vast gulf which separates genius from mere talent has been published and set abroad by those fortunate persons who fell, or fancied themselves to fall, under the former highly satisfactory and agreeable category. Genius, in short, real or self-suspected, has always been at great pains to glorify itself at the expense of poor commonplace inferior talent. There is a certain type of great man in particular which is never tired of dilating upon the noble supremacy of its own greatness over the spurious imitation. It offers incense obliquely to itself in offering it generically to the class genius. It brings ghee to its own image. There are great men, for example, such as Lord Lytton, Disraeli, Victor Hugo, the Lion Comique, and Mr. Oscar Wilde, who pose perpetually as great men; they cry aloud to the poor silly public so far beneath them, 'I am a genius! Admire me! Worship me!' Against this Byronic self-elevation on an aërial pedestal, high above the heads of the blind and battling multitude, we poor common mortals, who are not unfortunately geniuses, are surely entitled to enter

occasionally our humble protest. Our contention is that the genius only differs from the man of ability as the man of ability differs from the intelligent man, and the intelligent man from the worthy person of sound common sense. The sliding scale of brains has infinite gradations: and the gradations merge insensibly into one another. There is no gulf, no gap, no sudden jump of nature; here as elsewhere, throughout the whole range of her manifold productions, our common mother *non facit saltum*.

The question before the house, then, narrows itself down finally to this: what are the conditions under which exceptional ability or high talent is likely to arise?

Now I suppose everybody is ready to admit that two complete born fools are not at all likely to become the proud father and happy mother of a Shakespeare or a Newton. I suppose everybody will unhesitatingly allow that a great mathematician could hardly by any conceivable chance arise among the South African Bushmen, who cannot understand the arduous arithmetical proposition that two and two make four. No amount of education or careful training, I take it, would suffice to elevate the most profoundly artistic among the Veddahs of Ceylon, who cannot even comprehend an English drawing of a dog or horse, into a respectable president of the Royal Academy. It is equally unlikely (as it seems to me) that a Mendelssohn or a Beethoven could be raised in the bosom of a family all of whose members on either side were incapable (like a distinguished modern English poet) of discriminating any one note in an octave from any other. Such leaps as these would be little short of pure miracles. They would be equivalent to the sudden creation, without antecedent cause, of a whole vast system of nerves and nerve-centres in the prodigious brain of some infant phenomenon.

On the other hand, much of the commonplace shallow fashionable talk about hereditary genius—I don't mean, of course, the talk of our Darwins and Galtons, but the cheap drawing-room philosophy of easy sciolists who can't understand them—is itself fully as absurd in its own way as the idea that something can come out of nothing. For it is no explanation of the existence of genius to say that it is hereditary. You only put the difficulty one place back. Granting that young Alastor Jones is a budding poet because his father, Percy Bysshe Jones, was a poet before him, why, pray, was Jones the elder a poet at all, to start with? This kind of explanation, in fact, explains nothing; it begins by

positing the existence of one original genius, absolutely unaccounted for, and then proceeds blandly to point out that the other geniuses derive their characteristics from him, by virtue of descent, just as all the sons of a peer are born honourables. The elephant supports the earth, and the tortoise supports the elephant, but who, pray, supports the tortoise? If the first chicken came out of an egg, what was the origin of the hen that laid it?

Besides, the allegation as it stands is not even a true one. Genius, as we actually know it, is by no means hereditary. The great man is not necessarily the son of a great man or the father of a great man: often enough, he stands quite isolated, a solitary golden link in a chain of baser metal on either side of him. Mr. John Shakespeare, woolstapler, of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, was no doubt an eminently respectable person in his own trade, and he had sufficient intelligence to be mayor of his native town once upon a time: but, so far as is known, none of his literary remains are at all equal to *Macbeth* or *Othello*. Parson Newton, of the parish of Woolsthorpe, in Lincolnshire, may have preached a great many very excellent and convincing discourses: but there is no evidence of any sort that he ever attempted to write the *Principia*. *Per contra*, the Miss Miltons, good young ladies that they were (though of conflicting memory), do not appear to have differed conspicuously in ability from the other Priscillas and Patiences and Mercies amongst whom their lot was cast; while the Marlboroughs and the Wellingtons do not seem to bud out spontaneously into great commanders in the second generation. True, there are numerous cases such as that of the Herschels, father and son, or the two Scaligers, or the Caracci, or the Pitts, or the Scipios, and a dozen more, where the genius, once developed, has persisted for two, three, or even four lives: but these instances really cast no light at all upon our central problem, which is just this—How does the genius come in the first place to be developed at all from parents in whom individually no particular genius is ultimately to be seen?

Suppose we take, to start with, a race of hunting savages, in the earliest, lowest, and most undifferentiated stage, we shall get really next to no personal peculiarities or idiosyncrasies of any sort amongst them. Every one of them will be a good hunter, a good fisherman, a good scalper, and a good manufacturer of bows and arrows. Division of labour, and the other troublesome technicalities

of our modern political economy, are as unknown among such folk as the modern nuisance of dressing for dinner. Each man performs all the functions of a citizen on his own account, because there is nobody else to perform them for him—the medium of exchange, known as hard cash, has not, so far as he is concerned, yet been invented; and he performs them well, such as they are, because he inherits from all his ancestors aptitudes of brain and muscle in these directions, owing to the simple fact that those among his collateral predecessors who didn't know how to snare a bird, or were hopelessly stupid in the art of chipping flint arrowheads, died out of starvation, leaving no representatives. The beneficent institution of the poor law does not exist among savages, in order to enable the helpless and incompetent to bring up families in their own image. There, survival of the fittest still works out its own ultimately benevolent and useful end in its own directly cruel and relentless way, cutting off ruthlessly the stupid or the weak, and allowing only the strong and the cunning to become the parents of future generations.

Hence every young savage, being descended on both sides from ancestors who in their own way perfectly fulfilled the ideal of complete savagery—were good hunters, good fishers, good fighters, good craftsmen of bow or boomerang—inherits from these his successful predecessors all those qualities of eye and hand and brain and nervous system which go to make up the abstractly Admirable Crichton of a savage. The qualities in question are ensured in him by two separate means. In the first place, survival of the fittest takes care that he and all his ancestors shall have duly possessed them to some extent to start with; in the second place, constant practice from boyhood upward increases and develops the original faculty. Thus savages, as a rule, display absolutely astonishing ability and cleverness in the few lines which they have made their own. Their cunning in hunting, their patience in fishing, their skill in trapping, their infinite dodges for deceiving and cajoling the animals or enemies that they need to outwit, have moved the wonder and admiration of innumerable travellers. The savage, in fact, is not stupid: in his own way his cleverness is extraordinary. But the way is a very narrow and restricted one, and all savages of the same race walk in it exactly alike. Cunning they have, skill they have, instinct they have, to a most marvellous degree; but of spontaneity, originality, initiative, variability, not a single spark. Know one savage of a tribe

and you know them all. Their cleverness is not the cleverness of the individual man: it is the inherited and garnered intelligence or instinct of the entire race.

How, then, do originality, diversity, individuality, genius, begin to come in? In this way, as it seems to me, looking at the matter both *à priori* and by the light of actual experience.

Suppose a country inhabited in its interior by a savage race of hunters and fighters, and on its seaboard by an equally savage race of pirates and fishermen, like the Dyaks of Borneo. Each of these races, if left to itself, will develop in time its own peculiar and special type of savage cleverness. Each (in the scientific slang of the day) will adapt itself to its particular environment. The people of the interior will acquire and inherit a wonderful facility in spearing monkeys and knocking down parrots; while the people of the sea-coast will become skilful managers of canoes upon the water, and merciless plunderers of one another's villages, after the universal fashion of all pirates. These original differences of position and function will necessarily entail a thousand minor differences of intelligence and skill in a thousand different ways. For example, the sea-coast people, having of pure need to make themselves canoes and paddles, will probably learn to decorate their handicraft with ornamental patterns; and the aesthetic taste thus aroused will, no doubt, finally lead them to adorn the façades of their wooden huts with the grinning skulls of slaughtered enemies, prettily disposed at measured distances. A thoughtless world may laugh, indeed, at these naïve expressions of the nascent artistic and decorative faculties in the savage breast, but the aesthetic philosopher knows how to appreciate them at their true worth, and to see in them the earliest ingenuous precursors of our own Salisbury, Lichfield, and Westminster.

Now, so long as these two imaginary races of ours continue to remain distinct and separate, it is not likely that idiosyncrasies or varieties to any great extent will arise among them. But, as soon as you permit intermarriage to take place, the inherited and developed qualities of the one race will be liable to crop up in the next generation, diversely intermixed in every variety of degree with the inherited and developed qualities of the other. The children may take after either parent in any combination of qualities whatsoever. You have admitted an apparently capricious element of individuality; a power on the part of the half-breeds of differing from one another to an extent quite impossible in the two

original homogeneous societies. In one word, you have made possible the future existence of diversity in character.

If, now, we turn from these perfectly simple savage communities to our own very complex and heterogeneous world, what do we find? An endless variety of soldiers, sailors, tinkers, tailors, butchers, bakers, candlestick makers, and jolly undertakers, most of whom fall into a certain rough number of classes, each with its own developed and inherited traits and peculiarities. Our world is made up, like the world of ancient Egypt and of modern India, of an immense variety of separate castes—not, indeed, rigidly demarcated and strictly limited, as in those extremely hierarchical societies, but still very fairly hereditary in character—and given on the average to a tolerably close system of intermarriage within the caste.

For example, there is the agricultural labourer caste—the Hodge Chawbacon of urban humour, who in his military avatar also reappears as Tommy Atkins, a little transfigured, but at bottom identical—the alternative aspect of a single undivided central reality. Hodge for the most part lives and dies in his ancestral village: marries Mary, the daughter of Hodge Secundus of that parish, and begets assorted Hodges and Marys in vast quantities, all of the same pattern, to replenish the earth in the next generation. There you have a very well-marked hereditary caste, little given to intermixture with others, and from whose members, however recruited by fresh blood, the object of our quest, the Divine Genius, is very unlikely to find his point of origin. Then there is the town artisan caste, sprung originally, indeed, from the ranks of the Hodges, but naturally selected out of its most active, enterprising, and intelligent individuals, and often of many generations standing in various forms of handicraft. This is a far higher and more promising type of humanity, from the judicious intermixture of whose best elements we are apt to get our Stephensons, our Arkwrights, our Telfords, and our Edisons. In a rank of life just above the last, we find the fixed and immobile farmer caste, which only rarely blossoms out, under favourable circumstances on both sides, into a stray Cobbett or an almost miraculous miller Constable. The shopkeepers are a tribe of more varied interests and more diversified lives. An immense variety of brain elements are called into play by their diverse functions in diverse lines; and when we take them in conjunction with the upper mercantile grades, which are chiefly composed of

their ablest and most successful members, we get considerable chances of those happy blendings of individual excellences in their casual marriages which go to make up talent, and, in their final outcome, genius. Last of all, in the professional and upper classes there is a freedom and play of faculty everywhere going on, which in the chances of intermarriage between lawyer-folk and doctor-folk, scientific people and artistic people, county families and bishops or law lords, and so forth *ad infinitum*, offers by far the best opportunities of any for the occasional development of that rare product of the highest humanity, the genuine genius.

But in every case it is, I believe, essentially intermixture of variously acquired hereditary characteristics that makes the best and truest geniuses. Left to itself, each separate line of caste ancestry would tend to produce a certain fixed Chinese or Japanese perfection of handicraft in a certain definite restricted direction, but not probably anything worth calling real genius. For example, a family of artists, starting with some sort of manual dexterity in imitating natural forms and colours with paint and pencil, and strictly intermarrying always with other families possessing exactly the same inherited endowments, would probably go on getting more and more woodenly accurate in its drawing; more and more conventionally correct in its grouping; more and more technically perfect in its perspective and light-and-shade, and so forth, by pure dint of accumulated hereditary experience from generation to generation. It would pass from the Egyptian to the Chinese style of art by slow degrees and with infinite gradations. But suppose, instead of thus rigorously confining itself to its own caste, this family of handicraft artists were to intermarry freely with poetical, or sea-faring, or candlestick-making stocks. What would be the consequence? Why, such an infiltration of other hereditary characteristics, otherwise acquired, as might make the young painters of future generations more wide-minded, more diversified, more individualistic, more vivid and life-like. Some divine spark of poetical imagination, some tenderness of sentiment, some play of fancy, unknown perhaps to the hard, dry, matter-of-fact limners of the ancestral school, might thus be introduced into the original line of hereditary artists. In this way one can easily see how even intermarriage with non-artistic stocks might improve the breed of a family of painters. For while each caste, left to itself, is liable to harden down into a mere technical excellence after its own kind, a

wooden facility for drawing faces, or casting up columns of figures, or hacking down enemies, or building steam-engines, a healthy cross with other castes is liable to bring in all kinds of new and valuable qualities, each of which, though acquired perhaps in a totally different line of life, is apt to bear a new application in the new complex whereof it now forms a part.

In our very varied modern societies, every man and every woman, in the upper and middle ranks of life at least, has an individuality and an idiosyncrasy so compounded of endless varying stocks and races. Here is one whose father was an Irishman and his mother a Scotchwoman; here is another whose paternal line were country parsons, while his maternal ancestors were city merchants or distinguished soldiers. Take almost anybody's 'sixteen quarters'—his great-great grandfathers and great-great grandmothers, of whom he has sixteen all told—and what do you often find? A peer, a cobbler, a barrister, a common sailor, a Welsh doctor, a Dutch merchant, a Huguenot pastor, a cornet of horse; an Irish heiress, a farmer's daughter, a housemaid, an actress, a Devonshire beauty, a rich young lady of sugar-broking extraction, a Lady Carolina, a London lodging-house keeper. This is not by any means an exaggerated case; it would be easy, indeed, from one's own knowledge of family histories to supply a great many real examples far more startling than this partially imaginary one. With such a variety of racial and professional antecedents behind us, what infinite possibilities are opened before us of children with ability, folly, stupidity, genius?

Infinite numbers of intermixtures everywhere exist in civilised societies. Most of them are passable; many of them are execrable; a few of them are admirable; and here and there, one of them consists of that happy blending of individual characteristics which we all immediately recognise as genius—at least after somebody else has told us so.

The ultimate recipe for genius, then, would appear to be somewhat after this fashion. Take a number of good, strong, powerful stocks, mentally or physically, endowed with something more than the average amount of energy and application. Let them be as varied as possible in characteristics; and, so far as convenient, try to include among them a considerable small-change of races, dispositions, professions, and temperaments. Mix, by marriage, to the proper consistency; educate the offspring, especially by circumstances and environment, as broadly,

freely, and diversely as you can ; let them all intermarry again with other similarly produced, but personally unlike, idiosyncrasies ; and watch the result to find your genius in the fourth or fifth generation. If the experiment has been properly performed, and all the conditions have been decently favourable, you will get among the resultant five hundred persons a considerable sprinkling of average fools, a fair proportion of modest mediocrities, a small number of able people, and (in case you are exceptionally lucky and have shuffled your cards very carefully) perhaps amongst them all a single genius. But most probably the genius will have died young of scarlet fever, or missed fire through some tiny defect of internal brain structure. Nature herself is trying this experiment unaided every day all around us, and though she makes a great many misses, occasionally she makes a stray hit, and then we get a Shakespeare or a Grimaldi.

‘ But you haven’t proved all this : you have only suggested it.’ Does one prove a thesis of deep-reaching importance in a ten-page article ? And if one proved it in a big book, with classified examples and detailed genealogies of all the geniuses, would anybody on earth except Mr. Francis Galton ever take the trouble to read it ?

RAINBOW GOLD.¹

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK V.—*continued.*

HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD ELUDED TWO ADVENTURERS.

CHAPTER IV.

‘THE game,’ said Armstrong, ‘was intended to be a satire on royalty, and an exposition of the natures and capacities o’ men. Observe the king. There’s no game without him. He’s essential, but he’s useless, and if that’s a contradiction in tairms, Job, ye must blame the man that invented the game, and not me that describe it. The poor big creature’s just able to lift a foot at a time. The common people bleed for him. The Church, in the person of the bishop, runs sideways for him. That’s a keen dig, lad. Do ye mark how the bishop’s course, from his own point o’ view, is straightforward? He sticks to his own straight line, but the man that has the board before ’m sees the crablike course he takes. The knight was oreeginally a casuist, or a lawyer. The castle was the military man, a downright fellow, Job—a straight strong fellow, with no subteelities. Then, the game’s a proclamation of the eternal verity of the gynecocracy.’

‘The what?’ said Job, looking up at him seriously.

‘Gynecocracy,’ repeated Armstrong, stoutly, but with a humorous twinkle in his eye. ‘Petticoat government. The lady rules everything. The game’s republican as well. The humblest pawn has only to go on his straightforward course to be a bishop or a baron, or to become transmogrified into royalty. There’s a sort of idea in it that all the pieces fought their way up once upon a time, which, as you may have noticed, is a prehistoric period. The game of chess,’ pursued the grey man, suddenly growing warm with his theme, ‘is the only mechanical invention the warld ever saw for the production of poetry and romance. In every game ye play, ye have intrigue and chivalry

¹ This novel has been dramatised by the author.

and loyal devotion. Now see here, in the game ye just retired from, look how these two Churchmen dominate the board. Ye've got a brace o' burly barons there, but the Church has been too wily for them, and their way's blocked everywhere. The queen's dead, poor lady. Never a thought had she but for that useless, heavy-footed lubber of a consort of hers, and she's flang herself into the vera gulf o' deith to secure him victory. Man, if Walter Scott were here, he'd tell ye a tale out o' that would bring the brine to your cheek.'

'Clem,' said Job, turning to where the hunchback sat in an arm-chair, with one white thin hand on each elbow, 'you'll have to look to your laurels. Here's Mr. Armstrong turning poet on our hands.'

'*Turning* poet?' inquired Clem. 'Do you know your own father-in-law no better than that?'

'Hoots, man!' said Armstrong, half pettish, half abashed; 'hauld your tongue!'

'I won't hold my tongue, sir,' cried Clem. 'And if you take that tone with me, Mr. Armstrong, I'll show Job something I happen to have in my pocket now.'

'As ye like—as ye will,' said Armstrong, with a half-sheepish, half-humorous look. 'But not in my presence. When I'm gone I'll leave my character in your hands, like Sir Peter Teazle. When I was a lad,' he hurried on, with the manifest object of keeping Clem from speaking, 'I'd a bit of a turn for rhyming, and found out for myself that love and dove would jingle, and in my auld age, I've gone back on the follies of my youth. It's a harmless sort of craze enough.'

'What have you got in your pocket, Clem?' said Job. 'No, don't take it out. Did you know that I was gifted with second sight? See if I can read it?'

Friend o' my youth—

Am I right so far?'

'Right so far,' said Clem.

'You'll excuse the accent, Mr. Armstrong,' said Job, with a droll look at the old man. 'The Ayrshire dialect is not likely to come very trippingly from a Castle Barfield tongue. Let me see if I can read a little further.' He closed his eyes, and began to read or to recite deliberately—

Friend o' my youth, my auldest crony,
My benison be on ye, Johnny,

Your honest pow was black and bonny
 When first we met,
 But noo your lyart cockernony
 Has tint the jet.

'Clem,' said Armstrong, almost severely, 'ye've broken your plighted word.'

'Indeed I haven't,' cried Clem; 'I haven't shown them to a soul.'

'There's no trusting women,' said Job. 'You've shown the verses to your granddaughter, Mr. Armstrong, and she has repeated them to her father till he knows them by heart. That's all the mystery.' Sarah entered the room at this instant. 'Here's the criminal herself,' said Job.

'Come here, ye traitress,' cried Armstrong. 'Come here and apologise.'

'With pleasure,' said Sarah. 'I can apologise as fluently as any girl in Illyria. What have I done?'

'Ye've betrayed my confidence,' said the old man, pinching her ear. 'Ye've been reciting my rhyming havers to your father, and putting your grandfather to shame.'

'Oh, these poets, these poets!' cried the girl merrily. 'What is it you call yourselves in Latin, Clem? It's *genus* something.'

'Irritable,' said Clem.

'That's it,' said Sarah. 'Until Clem told me better, I used to think it meant irritable geniuses. The applause of the world is the breath of your nostrils, and you call a poor girl who tries to spread your fame a traitress.'

'When do you start for Coventry, lassie?' asked Armstrong, abruptly.

'To-morrow,' Job answered for her. 'And I'm going to keep house alone, like a hermit. You'll not stay beyond the three days, Sarah; I can't spare you longer. Unless, that is, your aunt has any real need of you.'

'She's not to say downright ill,' said Armstrong, 'but she's a wee bit feeble, and she has a friend coming to spend awhile with her. So she wrote me to ask if I'd persuade Sarah to go over. She wants to lessen the trouble of having one guest by inviting another.'

'Aunt isn't strong enough to go about much,' said Sarah; 'and her friend wants to see Stratford and Shottery and Charlecote and Lucy, and I am to take her about. It will be a very pleasant

time if the weather keeps fine, but March is not the nicest month in the year for country sightseeing.'

'It'll be almost the first time ye were ever apart, Job,' said Armstrong.

'The first,' said Job, in answer. 'She's seen a goodish piece of old England, but she's seen it all with me. She's never slept till now except under the same roof with her father.'

'And now, who knows,' said Sarah, 'what dangers I may leave him exposed to?'

She and Clem both laughed at this harmless jest, but Job sat seriously staring at the fire, and Armstrong winced a little, though nobody noticed him.

'Here's Monday,' said Job, rousing himself from his reverie. 'Sarah goes to-morrow, and when I've seen her off, I've a mind to take a trap from the Barfield Arms, if the day's fine, and drive out for a change. I don't like the house without her,' he said, knitting his bushy eyebrows, but smiling underneath the frown. 'Will you come, Clem?'

'Not to-morrow,' said Clem. 'I'll come Wednesday, and bring one of our traps. I'm not much of a Jehu myself, but I'll get one of the men to drive me here, and he can walk back again. What do you say to Wednesday, Job? Will it suit you?'

'Very well,' said Job; 'say Wednesday. I'll potter about in the garden to-morrow; there are lots of things to be done there. For one thing, that cucumber-frame's broken, Sarah, and I must turn glazier.'

'Well,' said Clem, 'Wednesday's a fixture, Job. I must be getting home, or I shall be late.'

'I'll walk a bit of the way with you,' Job said, rising also. 'I shall find you here when I come back again, Mr. Armstrong?'

The old man nodded assent, and Clem having said his good-bye, he and the giant sallied out together—an odd contrast as they always were. The night was clear and starlit, and, for the time of year, wonderfully mild and balmy.

'Clem,' said Job, when they had walked clear of houses, and got between the hedges of the lane, 'I've known you since you could walk, and I think I can trust you.'

'Well, Job,' said Clem, cheerfully, 'I hope you can; I think you can.'

'I'm going to tell you something I've more or less suspected for a year or two, and decisively learned to-day. It mustn't be

breathed to any single creature, you understand. You mustn't feel offended if I exact your solemn promise to keep this thing a secret.'

'Anything you choose to tell me in that manner, Job, and under those conditions, shall be sacred to me.'

'Well, lad,' said the giant in a tranquil voice, 'every man carries his death-warrant with him, signed and sealed. The only difference in my case is I know it, and can tell the thing I shall die of in all human chance.'

'You?' cried Clem, stopping in the road in his amazement and staring at the form that towered above him.

'Yes,' said Job, 'I've got heart disease. That's my secret. Keep it.'

'Job!' cried the hunchback, horror-stricken, 'you can't mean it.'

'It's true enough, Clem, lad,' Job answered. 'Except for that one thing I'm as tough as leather. But the heart's hung on a thread of flax. My mother died of the same thing. Now, Clem . . . I'll tell you why I confide this thing in you. I wouldn't have Sarah know it for the world. She'd break her heart worrying over it, and it'll be bad enough for her to know the truth when the end comes.' To all outward seeming he was as tranquil, as composed, and as solid as ever. 'But knowing now that my life may not be my own at any minute, I take this moment, the only one I may have, don't you see, to ask one thing of you. You love the girl, lad.' He laid his hand on Clem's shoulder, and his ponderous voice was deeper than common. 'Be a brother to her, be a friend to her. God knows! she may stand in need of brotherly friendship. I'm troubled, Clem; I'm in deep waters.' Clem could not answer at that moment, and they walked in silence for a time. 'Watch over her, lad, if I should go,' said Job. 'I know you'd do it without a word from me. But you can tell her, if ever need arises, that you had her father's solemn charge. I may live to be eighty, but I may go at any minute. You'll take the charge I offer you?'

'I'll keep it, Job,' said Clem, in a broken voice, 'if I ever have to keep it—which God forefend. I hope you may live for many a year yet, and see her happy.'

'I may, I may,' Job answered. 'Good-night, lad. Wednesday. Not a word of all this, mind; and not a look. She's as quick as lightning.'

‘It’s like your friendship,’ said Clem, wringing his big hand, ‘to have offered this trust to me. I won’t be unworthy of it.’

They parted with this speech, and went their separate ways, Clem with tears in his eyes, and Job tranquilly himself on the outside, whatever might be going on within.

‘You are soon back, father,’ said Sarah, when he re-entered the cottage. ‘You didn’t go far with Clem? Sit down, and let me fill your pipe for you. I feel as if I were going away for a long, long time, and I must pet you a little before I go.’

‘It’s a good girl, Job,’ said Armstrong smilingly, as Job took his pipe and a lighted spill of paper from his daughter’s fingers.

‘Ay,’ said Job, ‘it’s a good girl.’

‘Gentlemen,’ said the good girl merrily, ‘I am obliged to you. But may I ask why you pass this novel discovery from one to another so very, very gravely? Shall I go and leave you to discuss my merits in peace?’ She made a pretence of leaving the room, but when she had reached the door she turned, and running swiftly to her father’s chair seized him from behind, and putting both her arms about his head hugged it to her breast. Then with sudden demureness she seated herself between her father and Armstrong, and stretched out a hand to each. ‘You are a dear old grandfather,’ she said to Armstrong; ‘and you,’ turning to Job, ‘are the dearest father in the world. And now that we are all contented with each other, what shall we talk about?’

They talked of many things, she brightly and with gaiety, though touching now and then a softer note, and Job with an almost tender seriousness. At length Armstrong rose to go.

‘Well, Job, lad,’ he asked, ‘when shall we three meet again?’

‘When the hurly-burly’s done,’ said Sarah, inconsequently enough, but Armstrong answered her seriously.

‘Ay, lass! When the hurly-burly’s done there’ll be no more partings.’

Somehow, and no one of the three could have told why, a cold sense of solemnity fell upon them all.

‘Why should I have said that?’ asked Sarah. ‘There was no meaning in it. And you capped it with such a sudden seriousness you turned me cold.’

‘I’m an old man, my dear,’ said her grandfather, ‘and if ye live to be old yourself, ye’ll find that any sort of nonsense talked

at hazard will take grave meanings in your mind at whiles. The world's full o' gravities to old people. Good-bye, lass; be good and happy. Good-night, Job.' He went away gravely, and when he had reached the street he stood still for a moment to think, as if there were something he must needs recall. 'What brings this sort o' groping after shadows in my mind?' he asked himself half aloud. 'William Armstrong, ye're getting auld, and doddering in your wits.'

He walked on slowly and thoughtfully, and pausing mechanically at his own side-door, fumbled in his pocket for the key.

'There's too much dash and devil in his play,' said he. 'With greater caution he'd be formidable.'

There were no more cares, visionary or real, for him that night, for he was fairly back on his own enchanted ground again.

Job and Sarah sat up later than usual and talked of the girl's approaching journey. The coach passed the door of Konak Cottage, and was timed to catch the London train. Sarah had written a note to Aaron telling him of her intended journey, and in the pauses of their talk she wondered whether he would come to see her off by the coach, or whether he would be at the Birmingham station to see her off by train, or whether he would even be able to accompany her as far as Coventry. She took this pleasing uncertainty to bed with her, and thought over all the chances of it until she fell asleep. But before she and her father parted for the night he made another relapse into that earliest dialect of his youth which had once before surprised her. When she came somewhat absently to give him her usual good-night kiss, he put a hand on each soft cheek and looked at her with an infinite mournful tenderness.

'Thee knowst I love thee, lass?' he said.

She kissed him vehemently and nestled to him. Oh, yes, yes, yes, she said, she knew it well.

She was only going away for three days, and yet there was a little sadness in the thought of parting. But when morning came all that had vanished. True to time they heard the horn of the coach tootling cheerily, and Job, shouldering the girl's substantial trunk as lightly as if it had been a feather, walked up the garden-path and waited at the side of the horseroad. The coach drew up, and the driver, stooping from his seat to take the trunk so lightly poised in Job's hands, felt himself nearly pulled from his perch by its unexpected weight.

'I thowt the cussid thing was empty,' said the driver. 'Theest got a bit o' muscle for a little un, gaffer.'

Sarah entered the coach ; the door was slammed, the guard leapt nimbly to his place, and a minute later Job was looking after a cloud of March dust of the coach's raising. He went back and began to work at those garden affairs he had spoken of the night before. Once or twice a neighbour passed the gate, and leaning his arms upon it paused to say what wonderful weather it was for the time of the year, and each having quoted the proverb that a peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom, went away again. Nobody saw any change in Job Round, who presented the picture of strength, massiveness, and tranquillity with which Castle Barfield had so long been familiar, and not a hair's-breadth more or less so far as any man who looked on him could tell. The big grey eyes had their old look of wilful strength, the bushy, red-brown eyebrows knitted over them with as resolved a tranquil determination as ever, and even through the silky masses of the great red beard the dogged formation of the chin showed as decisively as it had always done since Job had arrived at man's estate. And yet there was such a change within the man as it is difficult to tell. The old tempestuous gloom was there no more, to be riven by the old wild lightnings of the soul. There were no more horrors to be fought.

Whether he would or no, his thoughts went back to his earliest boyhood, and he found himself recalling companions who had long been dead or forgotten. He remembered boyish affections, little touches of shamefaced sentiment which had never found expression, tendernesses of friendship which surprised him. He could translate the coarse daub of a portrait of his mother which had always hung in his father's sitting-room into something which he thought must have been like her forgotten face. It translated itself rather. He caught himself wandering in the summer fields with his young wife, and the fictitious peace of those days grew real with him. Sarah went toddling about the garden with uncertain footsteps, and he feigned to be outrun by her and allowed himself to be caught. He could hear her shrill laugh of infantine delight.

With all this was a great sadness, and a strange sense of dreamy unreality in present things. He worked in this mood all morning, and when his accustomed dinner hour drew near, he walked into the house, washed, arranged the table for himself,

and sat down to dine. Sarah's vacant place seemed to stare at him, and though he was usually but little to be impressed by solitude, he felt it so keenly now that some companionship seemed necessary to him, if it were only that of a book. He cast his eye about the room, and, seeing the family Bible within reach, stretched out his hand for it and laid it open on the table. As he ate, he read here and there a passage. 'Therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.'

'Now,' said Job, 'there's a gusto in that.' He turned the leaves backward: 'As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not,' he read, 'so he that getteth riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days and be a fool.' He read the words over again. 'It's a picture of what ought to be,' he said to himself. He turned the leaves back still further. 'There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.' He closed the book and pushed it away from him thoughtfully. 'Wisdom there, any way. Thou'rt saved from that burthen of my getting, lass. It was better gone. I've been at rest since it was gone. I've been at rest for thy sake. Wisdom. Wisdom,' he murmured. 'It prospered with none of us. Bonaventure left his share in the midst of his days and was a fool for all his cunning. Mr. Thomas Bowling,' serious as he was, a slow smile curled his features as he muttered the name, 'prospered less than any. Fools, fools, all of us.'

He went back into the garden and worked there all the afternoon, and his softened mood never left him for that day. The stormy times of his life refused to be recalled.

Evening came on chill and lowering, after the almost summer-like brightness of the day. He relit his fire, made his own tea, trifled over it for half-an-hour; then cleared away, and having made all snug by drawing the blinds and lighting the lamp, he sat down with his pipe and a volume of Shakespeare. The wind began to howl somewhat wildly, and one or two great drops fell down the chimney and hissed and spattered in the fire.

'It will be rain to-night,' said Job, looking up from the pages of *Macbeth*. 'Let it come down.' The latch of the garden gate clicked, and he heard a脚步 on the gravel. 'Who's this likely to be?' he asked himself. A rap sounded at the door. 'Come

in. Oh, you, is it, Whittaker? It's getting to be a wildish night outside, isn't it?

'Yes,' said Aaron; 'it's a wildish night, Mr. Round. It's been a fine day, too.' From one cause or another Aaron was pale and out of breath. 'Is Miss Round at home, sir?'

'She went to Coventry this morning,' said Job, scarcely looking at him. 'She wrote to tell you she was going.'

'This morning?' cried Aaron with a surprise which was not very well acted. 'How strange for her to have made such a mistake. She said Wednesday in her note.'

'Hum!' said Job, turning to look at him; 'have you got the note about you?'

'No, sir,' replied Aaron, feeling in his pocket. 'I'm afraid I left it at home.'

'I think you'll find that it's you who've made the mistake, and not Sarah. She read the note to me before she sent it. Look at it again when you get home.'

'I will,' said Aaron; 'I'm sorry to have missed her.'

'Do you hear that?' said Job, as the rain swept against the windows and the wind rumbled in the chimney. 'You'd best sit down and wait until the storm's over. How is the mine getting on?'

'Admirably, sir,' cried Aaron. 'It's what I always thought it would be—the real old-fashioned Staffordshire ten-yard coal.'

'That's all right,' said Job. 'Sit down, man, and make yourself at ease.'

Aaron sat down and rested an elbow on the round table upon which the lamp was placed. Instantly the ground glass lampshade began to clatter against the chimney it surrounded, and Job, looking up, noticed for the first time Aaron's unusual pallor.

'Hello!' he said, 'there's an odd look about you to-night. You're shaking like a leaf too. What's the matter? Here, let me feel your pulse. I've done a little bit of doctoring in my time.' He took Aaron's wrist and held it for a little time. 'I don't want to frighten you, Whittaker,' he said then, 'but if you're a sensible man, you won't go to bed without having seen a doctor. Let me look at your tongue. That's clean enough. You see a doctor to-night. It strikes me you're sickening for a fever.'

'Do you think so?' said Aaron, who had his own reasons for the emotion which so visibly agitated him.

'I'm pretty sure of it,' returned Job. He had no great affection

for young Mr. Whittaker even now, when the young gentleman for the greater part of a year had been walking with the utmost correctness and circumspection. But Sarah's welfare and happiness seemed bound up in him, and this fact aroused in Job an interest for Aaron which he would otherwise have been very far from feeling. 'Have you caught cold in any way?' he asked.

'I did catch a chill coming out of the mine the other day,' returned Aaron. 'I felt it the minute I touched the surface.' He thought within himself how lucky a thing it was that his agitation should be thus explained.

'You'd better take a glass of grog,' said Job. 'That can do you no harm, anyway.' He rose and walked to a cupboard which cut off one corner of the room, and drew from it a bottle of whisky, a sugar-bowl, spoons and glasses. Aaron's heart was beating like a sledge-hammer, and a fear crept over him that things were going too easily. Circumstance might have a trap for him. Who could have fancied that his own want of courage could have played into his hands in this way?

Job set the kettle on the fire, and taking up his book, again went on reading. By-and-by the kettle began to sing, and he laid down his Shakespeare and arose to mix the glass of grog he had recommended.

'By the way,' said Aaron, 'that reminds me, Mr. Round. I've a sample bottle of Scotch whisky here—I—I should like you to taste. I'm told it's remarkably good, and I've had an offer of six gallons very cheap. This was drawn—from the cask this afternoon.' He fumbled at the pocket of his overcoat as he said this, and his face was hidden from Job's observation. When he had done speaking he produced a flat flask containing about half-a-pint.

'All right,' said Job; 'try mine.' He had mixed a glass already. 'I'll try yours.'

It was all terribly easy, Aaron thought. Horribly easy. There was no need even for the little juggling trick he and Mr. Bowling had arranged together—a simple manœuvre by which he was to have replaced that first bottle by another of the same size, containing a somewhat smaller quantity of liquor, so that it might look as if some had been poured out of it, and therefore match the one from which Job had drunk already.

'This is extremely good,' said Aaron, after taking a liberal sip at the glass Job had set before him. His voice shook still, and

his heart beat so that he wondered if Job heard it. Job mixed for himself from Aaron's bottle, and then resumed his seat.

'So you think,' he said, 'that you're going to make a good thing of the mine, Whittaker?'

'Yes,' replied Aaron, shakily; 'a magnificent thing. I always felt sure that coal was there. I wish now we'd bought up land all round before we proved the estate. It'll go ever so much dearer now. You'll see mines over all that end of the parish in a year or two.' Would he never drink? How much longer would there be to wait? Would he detect a flavour in the grog and guess on a sudden the reason of Aaron's tremor? He said he had been a bit of a doctor in his time. How long would it take him to go to sleep? Was there enough to make him go to sleep? The coward and scoundrel shook from head to foot, and a cold sweat broke out all over him, though the palms of his hands were as hot as fire.

Job was musing and seemed in no haste to drink, but after a time he stretched out his hand sideways, took up his glass and sipped.

'It isn't bad whisky,' he said then, 'but I've made it a thought too sweet.' He added a little more of Aaron's whisky to the mixture and tasted it again. 'Not bad at all,' he said. 'What do they want for it?'

'They want ninety shillings for six gallons,' returned Aaron, who had been too cautious not to prepare his facts beforehand.

'Cheap enough,' said Job. 'Fifteen shillings a gallon. But isn't there a queerish sort of after-taste? A slightly bitter flavour? Eh?' Aaron clutched his glass as Job looked round at him and drank, looking down into the glass as he did so, to hide the guilt and fear he felt in his own eyes.

'No,' he managed to say, a moment later, 'I don't think so. I tasted it myself and noticed nothing of the sort.'

'Mouth's a little out of order perhaps,' said Job. He sipped a third time.

The task the scoundrel had set himself was beyond his powers. It was horrible, horrible, to sit there and wait and fear. He emptied his own glass at a gulp, and rose to his feet with a stagger.

'I think,' he said, with a prodigious effort, 'I'll go and see a doctor now, Mr. Round. I'll come back and tell you what he says. I've a—a pain in the head.'

‘Gad,’ said Job to himself, ‘I’ve frightened the fellow. There’s more funk than fever in his face, and I’ve seen enough of both to be able to tell one from the other.’ He contented himself with a single nod and a ‘very well,’ and taking up his Shakespeare, settled himself anew before the fire.

CHAPTER V.

THE keen March wind and stinging rain did something for Aaron, but his absence from Job Round did more. Yet when he had passed through the gate a hand laid suddenly upon his arm in the darkness sent his heart to his mouth, and he began to shake afresh.

‘Is it done a’ready?’ asked the voice of Mr. Bowling. ‘Got the medal?’

‘No,’ said Aaron, in a trembling whisper. ‘He’s—he’s got the grog. I—I left him drinking it.’

‘Left him a drinking it?’ demanded Mr. Bowling. ‘Why didn’t you stop and see him drink it? Wheer’s the bottle?’

‘On the table,’ returned Aaron faintly. ‘I’m going back again. I couldn’t stand it; I couldn’t stand it any longer.’

‘Hold up,’ said Mr. Bowling, with a terrible anathema; ‘I never seen such a shaking coward. And I never seen a coward that wasn’t a sneak, neither. Don’t you try to sneak with me. Remember, I don’t give the word to General Coningham afore I’ve got that medal in my hands. If I don’t give him the word, Joby Round’s a free man still. Try to slip me this night, and if there was need for it I’d set him at you.’

‘I shan’t try to slip you,’ replied Aaron. ‘Where would be the use?’

‘Not much,’ said Mr. Bowling; ‘I could be out there as soon as you, and it would go hard if me as speaks the language couldn’t get news of you as don’t. Why, I’d rouse the land again you, and split the gold among the villagers for twenty mile around, sooner than I’d be done.’

‘You can trust to me,’ said Aaron; ‘I shan’t try to slip you. Where would be the use?’

‘How long are you going to give him?’ demanded Mr. Bowling. ‘When are you going back again? Suppose somebody calls while we’re a standing here!’ He broke into whispered oaths and execrations, and went stamping about the roadway in a

sudden paroxysm of rage. 'Go back again,' he said hoarsely, laying both hands on Aaron's collar; 'go back, ye shivering lubber.'

'I can't go yet,' panted Aaron; 'he'd guess there was something the matter if I did. I told him I was going to see a doctor.'

'See a doctor!' groaned Mr. Bowling, exasperated almost beyond endurance. 'See a wet nurse!—see a idiot asylum! Cuss *me*,' said Mr. Bowling, letting his hands fall from Aaron's collar with a sudden desperate resignation, 'if I ever *did* see a shiverin', shakin', sneakin', whinin', limpin', crawlin' pup to come within a hundred mile of him.'

Castle Barfield High Street was deserted. Standing in front of Job's house the two could dimly see the lights of the shops which began a hundred yards away. The jets of the gas leaped and quivered in the street lamps, and the rain-flogged street seemed to crawl in the wind where the gas-light fell upon it. Aaron and his companion cowered in the shelter of the hedge. The clock of the near church struck the half-hour.

'When are you a going in again?' demanded Mr. Bowling.

'Not yet,' said Aaron; 'not till he's asleep.'

'And when d'ye think he'll be asleep, ye—ye—ye mutton-hearted, donkey-headed ——' There was nothing in Mr. Bowling's vocabulary to equal his conception.

'I shall wait here for half-an-hour,' answered Aaron. Mr. Bowling groaned in a new access of rage, and once more went stamping in a circle, taxing memory and invention for expressions equal to the cause.

Meanwhile Job sat within, sipping and smoking tranquilly. Underlying his strange contentment was a wonder at it which was disposed to be both tremulous and tender. His thoughts turned to his daughter, and he blessed her in his heart—not effusively or with any tempestuous movement of affection, but as a common father might, who loved his child and had an ordinary history behind him.

His glass was empty. The rain and the wind were without. Within was peace; deep peace. The noises of the wind and rain fell to a murmur on his heedless ear, and then in some strange fashion seemed to swell to a roll of organ music, and to die slowly, far away. Then it was summer weather, and he was standing in the fields. His dead wife and his living child were together with him, and both were in the springtide of their beauty, as never

child and mother were, outside the land of dreams. Then the dream slipped and faded into the great hollow of unconscious sleep ; and he sat with his chin upon his breast and his arms hanging lax by his side.

The clock of the near church struck the hour, and the rain and the wind were still. The latch of the garden gate clicked, and a step sounded on the gravel. Aaron's hair, as he approached the cottage door, was stirring at the roots as if it meant to stand upright by-and-by ; his heart seemed to batter at his ribs, his legs failed at the knees. He held on by the trellis work about the door, and tried to listen, but there was such a roaring in his ears that he could make out nothing. At last he summoned a desperate courage and knocked. He could not tell if there were any reply, but he knocked again more loudly. The garden gate clicked again, and Mr. Bowling sped on tiptoe along the gravelled footway.

'Do you want to rouse the neighbourhood ?' he demanded, seizing Aaron by the arm. 'If he can't hear that, he can't hear anything. Try the door.' Mr. Bowling's own whispering voice was husky, and his heart beat violently as well as Aaron's, but he was beyond comparison the bolder of the two. Aaron tried the door, but in such a bungling way that the seaman (who found his own fears and suspense so unbearable that he would rather have faced Job Round than endure them any longer), pushed him on one side, turned the handle and peered into the room. 'All right,' he said in a grating whisper, and opening the door a little wider, stole in with Aaron at his heels. Mr. Bowling softly closed the door, and the two conspirators stood staring at each other, haggard-eyed and pale. The same thought was in the mind of each, and at the selfsame instant sent the eyes of both to the sleeping man. What if he had detected the trick, and knew its purpose, and his present silence were but a ruse to lure them on ? What if the mighty figure rose, and the masterly eyes they had both dreaded should open on them ? Mr. Bowling crept behind the table and laid his hand on a formidable carving-knife that happened to be lying there.

'Jog his elber,' he said to Aaron in a croaking voice. Aaron ventured nearer and extended a timid hand.

'Put that knife down,' he whispered to Mr. Bowling. 'If he wakes I can tell him I'm not well, and you're going to see me up to the hotel. He thought I wasn't well before.'

'Jog his elber,' repeated the seaman, and Aaron extended a hand so shaking and indeterminate that Mr. Bowling's greed and his horror of his own fears so stirred him that he came roughly round the table to the front of the unconscious figure in the arm-chair, and kneeling before it, knife in hand, began to fumble at the buttons of the waistcoat to release the watch-chain. At that instant a boy running home along the High Street, drew a hoop-stick across the bars of the garden gate with a clatter so surprising, so sudden, and so threatening that the two rascals jumped, and Mr. Bowling, rising suddenly to his feet, fell backwards. He stretched out a hand to save himself, and thrust it into the smouldering coals, whereat a roar escaped him, and in his natural hurry to withdraw his hand he caught hold of the nearest object, which happened to be the kettle. Down came the kettle with a crash into the fireplace, the fire-irons followed it—the very voice of doom would have been no more dreadful than these noises were at the moment to the men who heard them; and then everything went silent. The sleeping figure never moved.

Mr. Bowling began to curse and moan over his damaged hand, and to brush from it with great gingerliness the blackened ashes which still clung to it. Suddenly, with an impatient oath, he seized with the uninjured hand the medal which hung at Job Round's watch-chain, and tugged at it with no other result than to drag the watch violently from the pocket.

'Unfasten that there watch-chain,' he said savagely, and Aaron with shaking fingers obeyed him. Bowling snatched the watch from his hand and thrust it into his own trouser pocket with its attached chain and medal. 'And now come on,' he said. Aaron moved towards the door. 'Wait a bit,' said Mr. Bowling, and to Aaron's horror he stepped back and took Job Round by the beard. 'Ah, Joby!' he said in a jeering voice, 'you've took me by it afore to-day, haven't you? You've had many a gird at me, Joby. You'd sooner see it rot theer an' rust to powder, would you, than me have one piastre of it? More'n four-and-twenty year you've kep me hungry and thirsty and poor and hard labourin', have you! damn you! And now I've got it! got it! got it!'

'Eh!' said Aaron, seizing him by the shoulder and dragging at him with both hands; 'listen!'

They listened, and except for the loud murmur in their own ears there was a death-like silence.

‘Come away,’ cried Aaron, in a horror and agony of fear; ‘come away. Every second’s dangerous here.’

Mr. Bowling, shaking his damaged fist at Job and snarling at him with an inarticulate jeer, suffered himself to be drawn into the garden.

‘Got a handkicher?’ he asked there. ‘Let’s have something to wrap up this here hand o’ mine. That’s a odd thing,’ continued Mr. Bowling, as he wrapped up his wounded member. ‘Ears and ‘ears ago, he says to me, Job Round does, “If ever you meddles with me,” he says, “you’ll burn your fingers, William.” And so I have.’

‘I—I thought,’ said Aaron, trying to be at least as much at ease as his companion, ‘I thought you said your name was Thomas.’

‘So it is,’ said Mr. Bowling, groaning at his wounds.

‘Then why did he call you William?’ demanded Aaron.

‘Why,’ said Mr. Bowling sardonically, ‘it was a pet name he had for me. You’ll find out the use of having two names afore you’re much older. Here, let’s get out of this. A pleeceman passed twice while I was a standing outside there, and I don’t want to be seen again.’

‘Don’t let us go through the High Street,’ urged Aaron, at the gate.

‘Why not?’ asked the other.

‘We might be seen together.’

Mr. Bowling jeered at the speaker. ‘Take which road you like,’ he answered. ‘I’m a going through the High Street, and I’m a going straight to General Coningham’s. When Joby Round wakes up he’ll be for following me, but I fancy they won’t let him.’

Aaron felt certain that everybody who set eyes on him would know what he had done and whither he was going. Of course he knew very well that this fear was absurd, and yet the profoundest scorn of it which he could summon entirely failed to shake it. Mr. Bowling, who had discarded his smock frock, and was habited in a complete suit of heavy corduroys, rolled along before him, and Aaron followed, afraid to lose sight of him for a moment. He had sworn to keep faith with Mr. Bowling, and Mr. Bowling had sworn to keep faith with him. He thought he could guess, from his own sentiments with regard to the oath, the nature of Mr. Bowling’s. He was fully persuaded that his companion would cut

and run at the earliest opportunity, and he was fully determined to forestall any such intentions. As he marched in Mr. Bowling's rear, trembling lest any lonely figure in the ill-lit street should turn out to be a constable who in some supernatural manner should know all about him, and be gifted with extraordinary powers for his arrest and detention, his mind was still free enough to play about the possibilities of circumventing his partner. To have drugged and robbed one man within an hour was surely the most natural way in the world for making ready to drug and rob another. Aaron knew Job Round's story now, and knew that Mr. Bowling expected to receive a hundred pounds for betraying him to his enemy. Without that hundred pounds Mr. Bowling would be unable to move, and with it Aaron might be able to move a little quicker. Extra money would mean extra rapidity of locomotion, and why, the young man asked himself, with a flush of something like surprised indignation, why should he give twenty-five thousand pounds away to Mr. Bowling? The idea was absurd—prodigious. Aaron scouted it, as he would have scouted a serious attempt to demonstrate that two and one make nine. He felt it like an insult to his own intelligence, and he never doubted for a second that Mr. Bowling was as fully animated as himself by the reflection that the whole is greater than a part.

They got through the High Street without exciting any man's notice, and Aaron followed the seaman's lead into the lane which led to the Warren, and then, knowing observation to be much less likely there, he hastened to overtake him.

‘You don't think he's likely to keep you waiting for the money, do you?’ he asked.

‘No,’ said Mr. Bowling, in a guarded growl, ‘I made him give his solemn oath he'd pay it down when I give him leave to move. I see him last night, and he'd got his evidence all right. He's got two witnesses within six mile at this minute. They'll be at the barracks to-morrow morning to be set in front of Joby Round, Esquire. They'll rub the Squire off of him when they get him there, and rub some new marks into that big back of his'n to keep the others company. I see the others one day, when we was a bathing, nigh on five-and-twenty 'ear ago.’

Aaron fell back a step, and turned a little sick. He did not hate Job Round; he had never hated anybody—much. He thought Mr. Bowling's rejoicing a very unpleasant thing to wit-

ness. He was sorry for Job Round, and was very much relieved to have had nothing to do with his betrayal.

'Here's the gate,' said Mr. Bowling, after a silent tramp of four or five minutes. 'You wait about here, so as not to be noticed particular if anybody passes. I'll be out in five minutes.'

'I say,' returned Aaron, catching him by his corduroy sleeve, 'you'd better let me keep the watch!'

'Had I?' said Mr. Bowling. 'What for?'

'I thought,' said Aaron, stammering somewhat, 'you might like to show you trusted me.'

'No,' said Mr. Bowling, calmly, 'I'm in no particular hurry to show you that. When we come to pen and ink and paper, you shall write for yourself whatever there is on this here medal, and then we shall both know all about it. But yet awhile, with your leave and my respects, I'll keep it where it is, young governor.' He laid a hand on Aaron's breast, and thrusting his bearded face forward, continued in another tone: 'Mind this. No man as plays unfaithful to a pal 'll ever lay a hand on that there treasure. I've swore to you; you've swore to me. Wherefore let us be contented, and likewise trustful and playfairing. Mind you, that's a certainty. It's only playfairing and having faith in one another as'll ever lay a finger on that there gold. I know it. If it had ha' been played fair with it might ha' been spent afore now. Wait there.'

He pushed the gate with his shoulder, and as it yieldeid and he went backwards with it, nursing his burnt hand, Aaron dimly made out that he nodded once or twice, as if in confirmation of his words. When he had gone rolling up the avenue, crunching the gravel beneath his heavy boots, Aaron slipped within the gate and followed, treading on the grass, and bringing down cold showers of rain from the laurel bushes which bordered the drive. A dog rattled a chain and barked in a deep hoarse voice at no great distance, and Aaron stood still to listen to Bowling's foot-steps. In a very little while they paused, and he heard a bell ringing, and then the opening of a door, which made a path for a broad line of light to fall upon the wet grass, and the bare trees, and a chill fog that hung amidst their branches. This line of light disappeared as suddenly as it came, the dog's bark died into a growl, and the chain trailed with a hollow sound as the brute re-entered his kennel.

Then time began to drag dolefully, and all the unwelcome

mental guests whom Aaron would fain have held at arm's length for ever began to pay him visits. Sarah in tears, in scorn, in hate. His partners in amazement, in wrath, in pursuit of him. Job Round asleep. Job Round awaking. Seized, tried, flogged, imprisoned. Worse than all, escaped a second time, and making his way to those wild hills to encounter Aaron there.

What if there were still a chance to undo it all? What if he might run back to Konak Cottage, feign to discover Job Round's state, summon a doctor, administer stimulants, tell him of the dangers that menaced him, and escape, thereby, the consequences of the dishonest dealings at the mine? This was all visionary, and no better than mere madness. He knew it, but whilst he thought these things he lived them, and his imagination was dowered for the time with an incredible activity and brilliance and minuteness. If he had ever expected to suffer like this, he would have gone straight. If he had never gone in league with Mr. Bowling he would have had the whole of that fifty thousand pounds, without even the trouble of fetching it, in all likelihood. Even if he had had to fetch it he would have had it all without manoeuvring, trouble, or dispute. What a mistake it had been to go wrong! What an ass he had been, to be sure, about that mine! Why not have told the truth about it? It was so hard, he answered, to tell the truth after having bounced and lied as he had done. Then why have bounced and lied?

Who could have guessed that just a little harmless brag could have brought a fellow to this? Castle Barfield would have something to talk and think about for a day or two in his flight and Job's arrest. If he had guessed that any such danger had overhung Sarah's father—well, it was of no use to think of these things. He had been fairly cornered and couldn't help himself, and if people didn't want to be found out, and caught and punished, they shouldn't commit—. An extremely unpleasant reflection.

'Is that fellow going to be all night there?'

No, the fellow was coming at that moment. The door opened, and the wide line of light broke a second time upon the darkness, and showed the wet gray-green turf, and the bare branches with the fog amongst them. Aaron ran on tiptoe to the gate, and waiting there heard Mr. Bowling's returning footsteps crunching on the gravel. By-and-by he made out Mr. Bowling himself, and whispered at him—

'Got the money?'

‘Yes,’ Mr. Bowling whispered back again. ‘Come along. You’re game for a five-mile walk, ain’t you? We’ll be in London afore mornin’.’ They tramped for awhile side by side along the darkened lane in silence, and then Mr. Bowling, in a harsh and untuneful voice, began to sing.

‘Hush!’ said Aaron, ‘hush! Somebody may hear you.’

‘What’s that matter?’ cried the other noisily. Then lowering his voice, ‘Ain’t we safe now, you lubber? If it worn’t for this here burned hand o’ mine I’d be as happy as a king.

‘Thus John the Gener-al despatches:
In vain his name he doffed!
His body’s goin’ to be under hatches,
And Tom is goin’ aloft.’

In the quiet room in Konak Cottage the fire burned out and the figure in the chair sat still. The lamp burned on until six o’clock in the morning, and then went out in smoke and evil odours. The figure in the chair sat still. The dawn broke mild and beautiful after the rain, and the birds began to chirrup in the garden. The light grew broader and broader, until the room was full of it. The voices of children on their way to school, the sounds of leisurely traffic, nodding bells of grave horses, rolling wheels of heavy carts, and the drawling cries of the drivers, sounded from without. The world’s business had begun again, but the figure in the chair sat still, before the dead cold ashes of the fire.

Clem Bache, driving along Castle Barfield High Street, noticed an unusual spectacle a hundred yards ahead. Half a dozen scarlet-clad soldiers marched two abreast, and a seventh kept pace a little apart to the rear. Just as he sighted them they paused—in front of Konak Cottage. It struck him with a great surprise when they all entered at the gate.

‘Get along,’ he said to the man who drove with him; ‘let me see what this means.’ He alighted at the gate, and saw that two of the men stood outside the cottage door, stiff and upright, as if on guard.

‘Can’t come in. At present!’ said one, and set a cavalry carbine across the doorway. It touched each side of the trellis work of the porch.

‘Can’t go in?’ said Clem, with a vague terror at his heart.
‘Why not?’

Before the man could answer, another appeared at the door.

'Slipped this time for good and all,' he said. 'Bevan, you start off and find the nearest doctor. Then send the first police officer you find this way.'

'What is it?' cried Clem, the vague terror mounting higher and higher.

'Are you a friend of the party as lived here?' asked the third man, who wore three gold-laced V-shaped stripes upon his arm. 'There's no objection to your coming in, so far as I know.'

Clem entered, and saw still seated in the chair before the dusty grate, the King of Terrors.

CHAPTER VI.

THE two scoundrels tramped into Birmingham together. Mr. Bowling in the highest possible spirits, and Aaron seeing in each bush an officer. Mr. Bowling's hand caused him much uneasiness, but nothing could dash just then the sense of triumph and revenge which filled him, and fed his heart with very manna.

'I ain't a going to be like sneakin' Joby,' he said to Aaron. 'I ain't a going to live rooted in the mud like a cabbage. I'm a going to wander wheer I will, I am. I shall go fust-class everywhere. I shall have black togs and a tall hat, like a cap'n when he goes ashore. I shall chew the best tobacco, and drink the best o' liquor, wines an' sperits both.' He cut an ungainly caper at the fancy, and then groaned over his burned and stinging hand. 'I say,' he went on a minute later, speaking in a subdued tone, and edging near to Aaron, 'you'll have to take a name, you know. Mind you, I ain't Thomas Bowling now, nor yet William Dean. You think of a name and I'll think of a name. I'll have a good un while I'm at it. Sheppard's a good un, ain't it?—Jack Sheppard. Might be called Johnny, familiar like, for short. Turpin's a good un, too; Richard Turpin. Mix 'em, and it comes to Dicky Sheppard. That'll do for me—Mr. Richard Sheppard. What's yours?'

Aaron saw as clearly as Mr. Bowling the necessity for the assumption of an alias, but it hurt his sense of dignity to choose a name at Mr. Bowling's bidding. He began to see that until this adventure was over he had linked himself to an extremely vulgar person, with whom it was highly disagreeable to be bound in any enterprise. This reflection strengthened his resolve to be

rid of Mr. Bowling at the earliest opportunity. He felt that he could not descend to the level of Mr. Bowling's aspect or address, and he had a rather exaggerated idea of his own gentility, so that the inevitable contrast between himself and his travelling companion looked greater than it was.

'I think,' he said, 'that until we get to London it would be better if we didn't seem to know each other. We could travel up by the same carriage,' he added rather hastily, 'but it might look accidental.'

'You trust me, matey,' returned Mr. Bowling, who saw his drift. 'Fairplay's my motter. It's took me a quarter of a century to learn the A B C of this here business, but I've learned it now. That money's left for nobody as don't play fair. Beside which, I've took my solemn oath—so have you. Afore I go to bed to-night I'm going to learn that there medal off by heart. You learn it off by heart likewise. Soak it into your head and nobody can't steal it; soak it into your head, and you can't get your pocket picked of it, nor drop it overboard, nor yet run away and leave it in a house afire, if such a thing should happen. Soak it in, and there you are for ever. I might ha' soaked it in a quarter of a century back, and ha' lived like a fightin' cock from then till now.'

This threatened process of soaking-in the precious knowledge the medal had to offer was unpleasant to Aaron's fancy, and if carried into effect would be likely to upset his plans. He walked on pondering, but every personage they encountered on the way, every vehicle that passed them, set his fancies flying, and his thoughts were so disjointed by his fears that they were useless to him.

'Been a thinking of a name?' inquired Mr. Bowling. 'Ain't you? You're a slow sailer, you are. Here, you're a going to seek your fortune, ain't you? Well, Dick Whittington, he went to seek his fortune—Whittington. It ain't that much unlike your own name, neither. You'd answer to it easy. Then his name was Dick. That won't act; no—that cock *won't* fight. My name's Dick. We can't have two of 'em. We ain't so poverty-struck as that comes to. Who else was there as went to seek his fortune? Why, I'm a going to seek my fortune, too, and I'll make you a present of my baptised name, Robert. There you are, fitted complete Robert Whittington.'

'All right,' said Aaron sulkily. 'Call me what you please.

but you'd better not be too familiar. I don't want to be looked at any more than I can help.'

'Oh, that's all right,' returned Mr. Bowling, who was not in the least degree disturbed or offended. 'That stands to reason. You'll be Young Governor, as respectful as you please, till I've got my new togs on. I shall set up the new togs to-morrow. There used to be a cove in the Ratcliff Highway as went by the name of Aaron, and did the thing slap-up. Black togs,' said Mr. Bowling, half in soliloquy, 'a tall hat, a yeller hankicher wore loose, and there you are, ready to be took for a bishop or a lord.'

In view of this picture he sank into a charmed silence, and rolled with a more imposingly nautical gait than ever. It was evident, even to Aaron's comprehension, that he was already attired in the new togs in fancy. By fancy's aid, Mr. Bowling was indeed at that moment rolling down the Ratcliff Highway, and was the cynosure of eyes there. His imagination soared so high that a resplendent Jewess winked at him, but he passed on serene.

'There's Joby Round a sleeping in his arm-cheer,' he said by-and-by. 'I wonder what he's a dreaming of. I've got you, this time, Joby, by the Lord! Rather see it rot and rust to powder, would you, Joby? So you would; I know you would; it stands to nature as you would.' He broke into a shout of laughter and waved both hands aloft. Then he began to sing—

'He's got the dibs, has Thomas Bowling,
The darling of our crew;
But Joby hears the tempest howling,
For Time has broached him to.'

'Hold your noise!' cried Aaron. 'Do you want the whole world to hear you?'

'What's it matter if the whole world was to hear me?' retorted Mr. Bowling. 'Do you think I ain't a going to do my heart good now I've got the chance? If you don't like it, walk on the other side o' the road, and look as if you didn't belong to me. I'm in for a sing-song.'

'His form was of the manliest beauty,
His nature was not sawft;
He overturned—as was his duty—
His foe, and went alawft.'

'You've been drinking,' said Aaron; 'you'll get us both into trouble if you don't take care.'

‘Drinking !’ cried Mr. Bowling riotously, ‘I should think I have been a drinking. Theer’s no amount o’ drink ’ud do me harm to-night, not if I swum in the strongest sperits as was ever brewed.’ Aaron groaned aloud, and Mr. Bowling suddenly modulated his tone. ‘Mind you, I can be as stiddy as a rock. I’m as sober now as a parson in his pulpit or a judge upon his bench. It’s a poor heart as never rejoices. I’m forty ‘ears younger than I was yesterday. There’s only one thing as disappoints me. I’d lay down half the money to see the cat-o’-nine-tails a dusting Joby Round. Swish !

‘Tom Bowling all his foes despatches,
And Joby’s shirt is doffed ;
His back the cat-o’-nine-tails scratches,
And—’

I’ve wore that out ; it don’t go like it did to begin with. What’s that light ahead ? That’s a public-house. Sorrow’s dry, and so am I. Give us some coppers, mister. They might stare to see a man in cords offerin’ a sovereign for a quart o’ beer.’

‘I haven’t any coppers,’ said Aaron.

‘Give us a shilling then,’ returned Mr. Bowling. ‘I’ll pay you back again, fair doos. Go in yourself, go into the parlour like a lord, and look as if I didn’t belong to you.’

Aaron, since his companion would not be dissuaded, entered the house with him, and did his best to look unconcerned, and unconscious of the existence of Mr. Bowling, who drank with irritating slowness, and was so lavish of compliments to a dark-eyed barmaid that he drew upon himself the observation of all the people in the bar. Half in terror and half with a throb of joy, Aaron saw that the seaman’s eyes were bleared and that his swarthy face was flushed. Mr. Bowling, in anticipation of the evening’s work, had been drinking heavily all day. Until now his excitement had fought off the effect of his potations, but excitement was now turning traitor with him, and had begun to help him on the downward road.

They left the house almost together, but nobody supposed they were companions or had anything in common, and they reached the town without meeting any adventure by the way. The London train started at midnight, and there was still an hour and a half to spare. They spent the greater part of this time in roaming about the streets, and Aaron trembled from first to last lest he should encounter some one to whom both he and Mr. Bow-

ling would be known. When at length they made for the station, his dreadful partner insisted upon buying a bottle of rum from the third-class refreshment-buffet. He was drunk enough by this time to produce a handful of sovereigns when he came to pay, and this exciting the suspicions of a railway detective who happened to observe it, Aaron's nerves must needs suffer for his companion's indiscretion.

The detective, after a word or two with Mr. Bowling (who was almost sobered by learning the occupation of the grave and authoritative stranger who accosted him), approached Aaron as he walked moodily upon the platform, and touched him on the shoulder.

'I beg your pardon, sir. Are you Mr. Whittington? A solicitor, of Castle Barfield?'

'Yes,' said Aaron. The answer hung fire a little, but he remembered in time the name his companion had fixed upon for his wearing.

'Oh,' said the detective, 'it's all right then, I dare say. Will you step a yard or two this way, sir?' Aaron obeyed. There was nothing, so far, in the least to be alarmed at, but there was such a tremor in his knees that he could scarcely stand. 'That fellow in the suit of rough cords there has got a handful of sovereigns. I thought he looked a bit suspicious.'

'That's all right,' said Aaron, doing his best to look and speak unconcernedly. 'He came by the money honestly. I know the man.'

'He said you did, sir. I was bound to ask you. I'm a detective on duty here, and it's my business, of course, to look at a thing like that.'

'He's an old sailor,' said Aaron, more at ease. 'He won't have the money long, I fancy, but he seems to think there's no end to it. Perhaps I'd better speak a word to him; he may take notice of me when he wouldn't of a stranger.' He hoped to shake off the detective, and was annoyed when the man followed him into the refreshment-room. 'I say, my man,' he said, touching Mr. Bowling somewhat timidly, 'this gentleman is a detective, and he tells me you've been flourishing your money about here in a very foolish way. Put it up, there's a good fellow. I'll ride in the same carriage with him up to town,' he added, 'and see that nobody meddles with him.'

'Now, that's a gentleman after my own heart, that is,' cried

Mr. Bowling. ‘That’s Mr. Whittington, that is—the respectablest lawyer in England. You take a drink along of me, Mr. Whittington?’

‘No, thank you,’ said Aaron; ‘and I shouldn’t advise you to drink any more.’

‘I’m all right,’ responded Mr. Bowling. ‘I’m in A 1 condition fore and aft.’

When Mr. Whittington opened his purse the detective saw the glitter of gold there, and his keen eye took notice of the fact that one compartment was stuffed fat with bank notes. He had no objection to taking a shilling from Mr. Whittington, and being a good fellow was honestly pleased, when the train came up, to see the sailor bestow himself in the same third-class compartment with the solicitor.

‘Any luggage, sir?’ he asked, touching his hat.

‘No,’ said Aaron, ‘my luggage is in town already.’

The guard’s whistle sounded, the train moved, and when they were once clear of the platform Mr. Bowling leapt to his feet and, digging at Aaron’s chest with the rum bottle he carried, cried—

‘Hooray for the Bawlkhan Hills! Eh, mister?’

In the downright desperation with which Mr. Bowling inspired him, Aaron found courage to rise and thrust him by the shoulders to a seat.

‘There are people on both sides of us,’ he said. ‘Can’t you keep quiet? Do you want to tell everybody where we’re going?’

‘All right, shipmet,’ said Mr. Bowling, ‘I’ll be quiet. Look here, you keep me quiet. You ain’t much for pluck, you know, but you’re dead nuts on caution. Now, what’s the matter with me is, for caution I ain’t to be valued alongside of the toss-up of a blind beggar’s farden. As for pluck, it’s beknown everywhere that Thomas Bowling—— Look here, governor, what was the name I given myself two or three hour ago? A new name’s like boots, it must be wore and wore until it’s hardly fit to wear no longer afore it feels easy on you. Have a drink? Then I’ll have one myself. What do you say? Don’t like rum? What are you a going to do with your share of the money when you gets it?’

Mr. Bowling advanced this question with a ludicrous air of drunken astonishment.

‘Now,’ he said, ‘I’m a going to soak this here medal into my head; that’s what I’m a going to do.’ He drew the watch and its appendages from his pocket, and, rising, held up the medal to the wretched oil lamp which burned in the roof of the carriage. Aaron looked at it with greedy eyes and heart. ‘Can’t make it out,’ said Mr. Bowling, staggering in the middle of the jolting compartment; ‘see if you can read it.’ He held it waving and revolving before Aaron’s face.

‘How do you think I can see it if you hold it like that?’ demanded Aaron; ‘lend it me.’

Mr. Bowling winked with a look of cunning and shook his head.

‘Not yet awhile, governor,’ he said. ‘When we come to pen and ink and paper you shall copy it, and then you can soak it in at your convenience.’ He stuffed the watch and chain back into his pocket and resumed his seat. ‘Here’s some of the beans,’ he continued figuratively, as he drew five sovereigns from the same pocket and surveyed them in his great brown palm. ‘Where we’re a going to there’s fifty thousand of them shiners a lying buried. We’ll show ‘em daylight—we’ll make ‘em fly.’

A jerk of the carriage disturbed his equilibrium at this moment, and he dropped the gold. Aaron fell upon his knees and chased the rolling coins into corners until he had caught them all.

‘Put them up,’ he said savagely, ‘and don’t be a fool. You’ll have neither them nor the others long if you behave in this way.’

‘I’m a going to be rich for life,’ returned Mr. Bowling, pocketing the recovered coins; ‘and now—being as you’re my pardner—I’ll tell you how. For a chum is a chum, though he’s never so chumly.’

‘Look here, governor, I had a pal once by the name of Derrick, Billy Derrick, which inherited a fortune of one thousand pound.’ Aaron bent forward to listen, and pretended to be much interested. Mr. Bowling, breathing rum and tobacco, continued his narrative with drunken gravity. ‘This is how to be rich for life, mister. This Billy Derrick has a fortune left him of a thousand pound. He was a middle-agèd man, and when he went to the lawyer’s for to draw it, the lawyer says, “If I was you, Mr. Derrick”—he called him Mr. Derrick, and bespoke him like as if he’d been the master of the finest craft as sails—“if I was you,” says he, “I should sink this money.” “Should you?” says

Billy, ironical ; "sink yourself," he says. "I'm going to stick to this, now I've got it." "That's all right," says the lawyer, "but what I mean is, sink it in a 'nuity." Maybe you know what a 'nuity is, governor.'

"Of course I know what an annuity is," returned Aaron. "Any child knows that."

"Any shore-going swab may know shore-going tackle," said Mr. Bowling, with a lurch. He leaned back sullenly, and discerning the rum bottle, took it by one hand, drew the cork with his teeth and drank. He seemed after this to forget his momentary pique, and leaning forward with the bottle between his knees, continued his narrative. "Afore they'd give Billy anything on this here 'nuity he had to go afore a doctor, and when he hears this, says Billy to me, "Georgey, my boy," he says. No;" Mr. Bowling paused and looked introspective. "I don't think it was Georgey—Henry I think it was. Call it Henry. What's it matter?" "Henry," he says, "I'm going to have these money-lending fellows. The less they think I'm going to live, the more they'll give me." That, explained the narrator thickly, 'is how the 'nuity ropes is pulled. Long life, low pay; high pay, short service.'

"Yes," said Aaron, nodding, "I know all about the system. Go on. I think I'll have a drop of rum now if you don't mind."

Mr. Bowling handed him the bottle, and he sipped. Mr. Bowling, inspired by this example, took a deep pull on receiving the bottle back again, as Aaron had anticipated.

"Well, what does Billy Derrick do? Why, being a sensible fellow, he goes off upon the drink. He keeps upon the drink until he gets the horrors like a lord. Then he goes afore the doctor. The doctor says, "This man won't last three years," he says. Billy Derrick gets the very highest rate of pay, and what's he do? Why he signs a pledge with himself never to get drunk again except upon a Sunday. He's a drawing that there pay now, as a natural consequence, and the very last time I see him, "Joseph," he says—no, "Henry," he says, "go and do likewise if ever you come into money." And likewise," concluded Mr. Bowling, "I intend to do."

"That was a very shrewd fellow," said Aaron, clumsily trying to seem genial and at ease. "I say, that's capital rum of yours. I'll have another drop if you don't mind. I'd no idea that rum was half as good."

‘Eh?’ said Mr. Bowling, with a laugh, ‘you’re a beginning to find out what’s good, are you? You wait till we gets back from the Bawlkan Hills, and I’ll show you what high living’s like. Here—fair doos. Don’t empty the bottle.’

Aaron was making a great show of drinking, but pressed his tongue against the mouth of the bottle, so that none of its contents escaped. Mr. Bowling seized the rum greedily when Aaron surrendered it, and drank as if he slaked an innocent thirst with water.

‘I shan’t drink no more to-night,’ he said then, recorking the bottle and setting it down in one corner. ‘I’ve got to keep my head clear, because I’m going to soak that medal in afore I go to bed. Wheer’s my ticket?’

‘I’ve got both tickets,’ returned Aaron. ‘Don’t talk any more. I’m tired. I want a nap.’

He had never been further from sleep in his lifetime, but he lay back in a corner with closed eyes and folded arms. Just then the train began to slacken pace, and in a little while had drawn up at a platform, where Aaron, to his sudden horror, heard the cry of ‘Coventry—Coventry.’ To the criminal coward the filmiest cobweb line that spider ever spun looks like a halter. Sarah was in Coventry. Anything unlikelier than her presence at the railway station an hour after midnight would be hard to fancy, and yet the thing *might* be. He shrunk into his corner as if he would fain have disappeared into the woodwork, and kept his eyes fast closed lest he should see the face he most dreaded in the world. Not the apparition of Job Round himself could have appalled him like the apparition of Job Round’s daughter. That—on reflection—appears to be the first favourable thing which has been set down in these pages concerning Aaron Whittaker.

The train went on again, and Aaron, making his eyes look as languid as he could, half opened them for a glance at Mr. Bowling. No sooner had they touched him than they opened wide and glistened with a light of triumph. Mr. Bowling was fast asleep.

The train sped on, and Aaron watched with a constant eagerness which set his breath labouring and his heart beating. Sometimes Mr. Bowling would move his feet restlessly, and at other moments would grumble in his sleep, and then Aaron’s forward-crouching attitude of attention would be suddenly abandoned, and he would slip back into his corner and lie there with

closed eyes. There was a second pause at Bletchley, and Aaron's head spun with the fear that some passenger, bound thence to London, would enter and spoil the solitude he wanted, but the train went on again, and he and his companion were still alone. When he judged that they were within a few miles of Willesden he began to push Mr. Bowling, at first softly, but more and more heavily, and then to shout at him. 'Hi!—wake up! We're nearly there; but to his immense relief he could not even elicit so much as a grunt of remonstrance.

He slipped a hand gently, gently, gently into Mr. Bowling's pocket, and the tips of his fingers coming in contact with the watch-chain he drew it gingerly forth, whipped it into his own great-coat pocket, and plunged into his corner seat again. He had scarcely done this when the train began to slacken speed. He had meant to have Mr. Bowling's money too. What was the use of the medal alone, if he left Mr. Bowling the wherewithal to follow him? A mistake—all a mistake. He would slip the watch back again. There was no time; the brake was jarring on the rails already. He would do it when they had once passed the station. He would tell Bowling—' You see how fair I mean to play with you. I could have had the medal to myself whilst you were asleep in the train.' Then he could take another and a better chance, and could strip his partner clean. That would be best done in a foreign city, where the man should have less means of following him. He had meant to escape at Willesden, but he saw now that that was a mere folly.

While these thoughts chased each other through his mind a man came round for tickets.

'This fellow wanted to go to sleep,' said Aaron, pointing to Mr. Bowling. 'This is his ticket.'

The collector took it with a mere glance at the sleeping man, and was just about to close the door when a servant of the company leaped into the carriage and sat down opposite Aaron. There would be no chance to put the watch back now, and when Mr. Bowling awoke it was a hundred to one that his first impulse would be to look for it. If he would but sleep till Euston! Nothing but flight for it now—nothing but flight! Aaron trembled and flushed, and paled and flushed again. His joints were loosened with a shaky horror, and his back-bone felt so useless to him that he could have fallen in folds like an empty sack. Only here and there a man tastes the full nausea of fear, because there is

only here and there a man who has the palate to be touched by all its flavours.

Once more the train stopped, and the noise of the jarring brake seemed fit to awaken the dead, to Aaron's fancy, but Mr. Bowling slumbered on. The company's servant was first at the door, and being sleepy, fumbled somewhat at the handle, unconscious that the man who stood behind him was ready to tear him with his hands. The door was opened at last, the way was clear, and Aaron darted from the carriage with one fearful backward glance at Mr. Bowling, who still lay huddled in his corner with his bandaged hand depending towards the floor.

He did not dare to go too fast, lest he should excite observation and inquiry. He knew little of London, and did not know where to bestow himself at that hour, and so he walked till morning dawned, and the streets grew busy. Then he breakfasted at a somewhat frowsy coffee-house, and, learning that he could have a bed there, determined to snatch a few hours of rest, and retired upstairs with strict injunctions that he should be called at noon. The pale day stared at him through the yellow window-blind and chased sleep from his eyelids for a long time, and his fears pricked at him so that every now and then a groan escaped him. But at last Nature would have her way, and he slept.

Being roused at mid-day he washed and took a second meal, and having discharged his bill, sallied into the streets, where, in spite of the absorbed indifference of the dwellers in great towns, a dozen people noticed his new habit of looking over his shoulder.

He was too unsettled, too frightened, too lonely, and too helpless to make a single inquiry of anybody as yet, and the streets were such a terror to him that he spent most of the day in coffee-houses. In one of these, towards evening, he grew suddenly courageous. An evening paper supplied him with solace and resolve.

Perhaps it was something in his own circumstances which sent him that afternoon to the police intelligence. He read there that at Marylebone Police Court that morning a labouring man, who refused his name and address, had been brought up on a charge of drunkenness. The labouring man had been awakened in a carriage at Euston Station, had professed to discover a robbery, had created a violent disturbance, had been removed with much difficulty by the police, and had repeatedly assaulted them on the way to the station. There it had been discovered that he was

possessed of ninety-nine pounds ten shillings in gold, and seven shillings in silver. This being naturally regarded as a suspicious circumstance, the labouring man, who wore earrings of gold wire, had the air of a sailor, and was disfigured by a great scar, was remanded in order that inquiries might be made concerning him. It appeared further that the prisoner was still under the influence of liquor, and that his bearing in court was that of a madman.

Aaron Whittaker suddenly became at ease. He bought a portmanteau of a largish size, with some necessary things to fill it, and he took a berth in the steam ship *Orinoco*, bound for Marseilles. He bought also a Continental Bradshaw and the best map of Turkey to be had for money. He got aboard the steamer, and in half an hour he was to be away. He went down to his berth, spread the map of Turkey on his bed below the port-hole light, and with the watch and chain and medal in his hand, began a search for the latitude and longitude he wanted. Whilst he was thus absorbed the door opened suddenly, and Aaron thrust the precious medal beneath the pillow and turned with quaking nerves and startled eyes.

His face went ghastly when he saw that his visitor wore the uniform of the police.

'I must trouble you to come with me if you please,' said the new-comer with unnecessary politeness.

'Why,' began Aaron, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could go no further.

'You are wanted,' said the officer, 'for being concerned in the death of Job Round, of Castle Barfield. You may say anything you like, but it's my duty to caution you that anything you say will—'

The officer saw that Mr. Whittaker was not likely to say anything just then, and deferred his warning.

The prisoner had fainted.

(*To be continued.*)

